

JULY 2006

IN THESE TIMES

**WHY BARACK OBAMA
ISN'T GETTING HIS MAIL**

**WILL THE 2008 ELECTION
BE STOLEN?**

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE PROGRESSIVE POWERBROKERS

- HOW TODAY'S MEDIA MAKERS ARE SHAPING
TOMORROW'S NEWS
- WHAT EVERYONE KNOWS (BUT NO ONE WILL SAY)
ABOUT FUNDING THE LEFT



**The Prospect
says Bush lost
his machismo.**

**I never
noticed any.**



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editorial

Rot in the Barrel

TAKE A MOMENT TO savor the convictions of top Enron executives Ken Lay and Jeffrey Skilling. Anything short of those verdicts would have been outrageous. That's especially true after a defense—"we did nothing wrong and didn't know what was happening anyway"—that was more of the fraud that pumped Enron up, then brought it crashing down.

Keep in mind that Lay and Skilling aren't anomalies in the corporate world. Besides the rogue's gallery of CEOs already convicted or awaiting trial, new stories are breaking about self-enrichment and cover-ups in the corporate ranks.

A federal oversight agency reports more than a dozen executives and the board of Fannie Mae, the mortgage finance enterprise, were involved in misleading accounting tricks that generated more than half of the \$90 million its CEO collected from 1998 to 2003. Meanwhile, federal regulators and prosecutors are investigating some 20 companies for backdating stock options for executives to their lowest point in the market, so they would be worth more when cashed in.

The problem, however, isn't just these bad apples. It's the barrel they're in. No effective system exists to hold corporations accountable to the public, their workers or even their owners. This is partly the fruit of decades of governmental deregulation that entrenched a culture of unaccountability. Enron was a prime case, profiting not only from deregulation of energy markets but also deregulation by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, just before its chairwoman Wendy Gramm—the wife of former Texas Republican Sen. Phil Gramm—joined Enron's board.

But the rise in corporate crime also reflects the shift in American capitalism toward a short-term perspective of meeting quarterly targets. This shift stems from a financial mentality that rewards making profits by cooking books, exploiting tax loopholes, looting worker pension funds, pursuing strategically pointless mergers,

speculating in complex financial derivatives and much more. Shady accounting to unjustly reward executives is just an extension of the financial shenanigans that accounting firms, lawyers and advisors devise as building blocks of today's corporate strategy.

Exorbitant executive salaries are integral to this wholesale corruption. Investors in Home Depot have been outraged that CEO Robert Nardelli has pocketed \$245 million over the past five years while its stock has declined and the value of its main competitor soared. Even worse, Nardelli ran roughshod over investors at the annual meeting recently, refusing to answer questions or even release shareholder vote details.

Many investors want to require that directors be elected by majority vote, that shareholders approve CEO pay packages and that executives give up pay and bonuses if received on the basis of inaccurate earnings statements. The Securities and Exchange Commission is considering some modest changes, and Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) is promoting broader legislation, The Protection Against Executive Compensation Abuse Act.

More openness and accountability to shareholders is a start. But it's not just shareholders, including workers with pension funds, who lose from executive fraud. The direction of corporations becomes skewed, endangering their long-term viability and their contributions to the nation's economic well-being. When companies like Enron set a standard for fraud, they hurt any company that is trying to compete fairly, thus encouraging foul play throughout the system. Executive overpayment fuels the growing inequality that deprives the vast majority of their fair share of national income.

Greater accountability to shareholders just isn't enough. These public corporations must also be made more accountable to the public and to their employees. The rot is so pervasive that we need a new barrel as well as new apples.

—David Moberg

IN THESE TIMES

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Military Expected to Report
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...article is by Thom Shanker, Eric Schmitt and Rich

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letters



Why Staying Is Even Harder

I agree with Chris Toensing's sentiment that it will be a blessing for Iraq when the last American soldier, mercenary, and—perhaps most importantly—businessman leaves Iraq (“Why Exiting Iraq Won’t Be Easy,” June). I agree that it would not be a “noble course of action.” After invading a country illegally and causing the deaths of hundreds of thousands in a textbook case of colonialism, we’ve lost the right to even think of the word “noble.” And I agree that it won’t be a “panacea for Iraq’s ills.” But it will be the first step in the right direction. And it is easy. Ask anyone who’s been in Iraq, and I don’t mean the Green Zone.

I visited my family in southern Iraq for 3 months between December 2005 and March 2006. I was ashamed by the arrogance I had brought with me as a Westerner, thinking that because I’d read a lot about the occupation, I knew what was going on. People who have lived their entire lives there don’t know what’s going on.

There are at least 11 militias operating throughout the country. Iranians have flooded into Iraq, home to the two holiest Shiite shrines in Najaf and Karbala, under the banner of Islamic parties (and maybe one saying “Mission Accomplished”). Occupation forces are there. American CIA agents are there. And Israeli Mossad and military are operating from a heavily guarded base in northern Iraq, in proximity to their longtime allies in Kurdistan. We are training death squads as we did in Vietnam and El Salvador. Iraqis know that every day may be their last, and while any number of sources may pull the trigger, responsibility lies with the United States.

The concept of civil war and sectarian strife is well-described by Iraqi Sami Ramadani, a political refugee from Saddam Hussein’s regime and senior lecturer at London Metropolitan University:

“It is not withdrawal that threatens Iraq with civil war, but occupation. ... The occupation’s sectarian discourse has acquired a hold as powerful as the WMD fiction that prepared the public for war. Iraqis are portrayed as a people who can’t wait to kill each other once left to their own devices. In fact, the occupation is the main architect of institutionalized sectarian and ethnic divisions; its removal would act as a catalyst for Iraqis to resolve some of their differences politically.”

Toensing describes the “insurgency” as “roughly 20,000 Sunni Arab[s].” However, no uprising can

last without popular support, and three and a half years after Baghdad fell, the legitimate resistance to our illegal occupation is alive and well. Toensing describes that sectarian violence worsened after the bombing of the Shiite shrine in Samarra in late February, but the reality I saw on the ground didn’t substantiate that.

If Saddam Hussein is at the root of the “civil war,” then why are so many Iraqis asking for him back? There is no question that his regime was brutal, but from the lack of security to the lack of basic supplies to the lack of electricity to the lack of potable water to the lack of jobs to the lack of reconstruction to the lack of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, Iraqis are much worse off now than before we invaded. From my contacts in Ramadi, Baghdad, and the south, many Iraqis prefer the lesser of two evils.

As scores of Iraqis die every day, it does not matter if you call it “civil war,” “sectarian strife,” or “democracy”; it is—by design—an American killing field, a smokescreen for stealing oil, and for establishing permanent military bases to defend American business interests. Bring them home, or send your own.

*Dahlia Wasfi
Denver, Colo.*

War and Drugs, Then and Now

Terry Allen’s “The Iraq War—On Drugs” (June 2006) is an excellent and very disturbing report. One of the

most disturbing concepts is that in Iraq the use of various medicinal “soothers” appears to be acclaimed. In Vietnam, they were not available, but if you think Iraq is a nail biter, try 24 hours slogging buttocks deep in sucking mud and chest high grass filled with VC and assorted pungee sticks.

So what did the troops in Vietnam do? Well, we know many became druggies on their own to cope. We all know how messed up that put them.

Now, I was not “in-country.” I was one of those aerospace industrialists that helped materially support that war and in the process wound up with several Vietnam vets working directly with me. There were six in all. Now, only three are left, the other three committed suicide at different times, but for very similar reasons—PTSD coupled with the cold shoulder this nation gave them when they came home.

What are we doing to ourselves and especially to those who step out front on our behalf or so they are told? In my mind they are all triple heroes, and I stand frustrated that too many will never hear my shouts of thanks or see my tears of sorrow.

*Waddell Robey
Harrisburg, Penn.*

Chaos, Not Anarchy

Thank you for the June issue. Some quick feedback about your use of the word “anarchy.”

On page 28, beneath the title for the article “Bankruptcy Law in Shambles,” you have the subhead, “What

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Lakshmi Chaudhry reviews "What Not To Wear"

Silja Talvi explores life behind bars in "Convict Nation"



FIRE ON THE PRAIRIE

a radio forum sponsored by *In These Times*

Aaron Sarver talks with Michelle Goldberg about her new book, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism*.

Emily Udell interviews Indian labor activists Ashim Roy and Anannya Bhattacharjee.

Ashim is the General Secretary of the New Trade Union Initiative, representing 200

unions across India. Bhattacharjee is an international program coordinator for Jobs with Justice. Both are part of an initiative to build solidarity between U.S. and Indian workers.

And you'll hear an excerpt of a talk about recent elections in Palestine by Rashid Khalidi.

To hear the show visit: fireontheprairie.com

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happens when the credit card industry writes congressional legislation? According to the judges who have to enforce it, anarchy." And, on pages 36-37, you have an article about an "anarchist cheerleader" who was elected to public office in Florida.

The "anarchist cheerleader" explains that "I and other anarchists believe that there should be no hierarchy, and that all decisions should be made on a community level"

That's a good explanation of an anarchist position. But your use of the word on page 28 perpetuates the common misconception that "anarchy" means "chaos."

Progressives should be careful to use "anarchy" correctly. It can mean a lack of organized government, and it can mean a lack of hierarchical government. But I don't think it can mean "chaos."

Alison Alpert
New York City

Dear Readers,

What you hold in your hands represents a year of hard work by *In These Times* staff.

"The First Stone" on page 18 is an excerpt from a book co-written by Editor Joel Bleifuss, *Was the 2004 Presidential Election Stolen?*, which is now hitting bookstores. And, for the past several months, Executive Editor Jessica Clark and Publisher Tracy Van Slyke have worked with a variety of progressive media organizations to explore ways to adapt to the 21st century audience. They report on what they've learned in "Welcome to the Media Revolution," on page 20.

These stories—along with "The New Funding Heresies" by Christopher Hayes on page 28—reveal that in addition to an emerging generation of media activists and funders a new powerbroker has arisen: the American citizen. Small donors are revolutionizing political campaigns, audiences are talking back to media outlets and voters are demanding accountability in the voting process.

Working together, individual citizens have power. We invite you to join us as we examine what it will take to energize a progressive movement. And we thank you for your support and look forward to your feedback.

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California State Senator Sheila Kuehl (left) is battling Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger over whether public school textbooks should study the role of gays in society.

Curriculum Wars

A California State Senator wants to help public schools catch up with history

BY JOHN IRELAND

CALIFORNIA STATE SEN. SHEILA Kuehl knows the pitfalls of being young and gay firsthand. At 17, she was a television star, playing the role of Zelda Gilroy, in the weekly television sitcom, *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*. She was good enough that CBS filmed four episodes of a spin-off titled *Zelda*, only to be shelved when network executives began to suspect that their lead actress might be lesbian. She was also expelled from her sorority at UCLA after some of her sisters discovered a letter from her girlfriend.

Sheila took her indignation to Harvard Law School, then into a successful law career and finally to the state house. She was the first openly gay member of the California legislature and has championed issues affecting its citizens as an assemblywoman and now a senator. In

February, she introduced a Senate bill (SB 1437), hoping to help to mitigate the alienation that gay teens face in public schools.

California law currently requires K-12 social science instruction to include a study of the role and contributions of both men and women, Black Americans, American Indians, Mexicans, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and other ethnic groups, with a particular emphasis on portraying the role of these groups in contemporary society. It prohibits textbook content, instruction or school-sponsored activities that reflect adversely on race or ethnicity, disability, nationality and religion. Simply put, SB 1437 adds sexual orientation and gender to that list, specifying that the information be presented in an age-appropriate manner. The bill passed the Senate and is headed

to a vote in the Assembly sometime this summer.

The bill is drawing California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger into a debate that will pit his socially progressive views against the socially conservative dogma of his political base. Nationally, it poses the question of whether public school curriculum can catch up with popular culture.

According to David Holladay, executive director of the Los Angeles chapter of the nonprofit Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), "the only way that gay and lesbian kids can see themselves in schoolbooks now is in the context of the AIDS epidemic or wearing pink triangles during the Holocaust." A 2003 GLSEN survey found that 76.2 percent of youth reported that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues were rarely addressed or discussed in school. The survey further found that silence and biased messages promote negative stereotypes, which can lead to discrimination, harassment and violence. But when these issues are discussed, gay students report that they feel safer.

In 2002, GLSEN conducted a study of 13 texts used in schools around the country. Four texts directly discuss gay and lesbian themes. Two of those four provided photographic representations of gay and lesbian themes. And only two reference "Gays and Lesbians" and "Gays and Lesbian Rights" in their index or table of contents.

The study's author, GLSEN's Director of Education Scott Hirschfeld, asks, "What are students to infer, for example, from a book that defines HIV/AIDS as something that happened to Rock Hudson during the Reagan years?" (p. 886, *American Odyssey: The United States in the 20th Century*, 1999). Of 12,530 total pages of text, an aggregate of less than one page directly addresses LGBT issues, a shockingly low .007 percent of the total textbook material.

Elizabeth Sevilla, a high school English teacher in Compton, says, "If this bill passes, my job gets easier. Kids giggle when the word 'gay' is spoken in class, because it is taboo. This distracts from my teaching, because I have to stop and challenge the ignorance. Many of them

use it in a negative way, meaning ‘stupid’—‘You’re so gay’—and this makes anyone who might be gay or have a gay family member or friend uncomfortable. But when the kids learn, for instance, that Langston Hughes, one of the great poets of the Harlem Renaissance was gay, they stop using the word as a weapon against one another.”

Indeed, it’s not just Langston Hughes. If SB 1437 becomes law, students could learn more about the role Bayard Rustin, a top lieutenant of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., played as principal organizer of the 1963 March on Washington. Many believe that he stayed behind the scenes to avoid political backlash from the revelation that he was gay. High school teachers could explain the 1969 Stonewall Riots in Greenwich Village, or the 1978 murder of San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk.

On May 25, two weeks after the Senate passed SB 1437 but before the Assembly considered it, Schwarzenegger’s office broke its rule of reserving comment on bills until they arrive for his signature. Director of Communications Adam Mendelsohn announced that the

governor would veto the bill. The timing is noteworthy, with the announcement coming just days before the beginning of Gay Pride month. While the veto announcement may lessen the expectations for the legislation, it could also galvanize its supporters, leading increased pressure on Schwarzenegger.

Mona Passignano, states issues analyst of Focus on the Family, is heartened by the stance announced by the governor’s office, but not entirely satisfied. “I really want to hear it straight from him,” she says.

Meanwhile, the bill’s sponsor, Kuehl, is not accustomed to taking “no” for an answer. “He hasn’t made up his mind, I don’t care what some underling might have said,” she says. “When it gets to the floor, I expect to talk to the governor and I expect to get it through. ... There’s nothing controversial about it ... once people understand what it really does.” ■

JOHN IRELAND has been published in numerous publications, including *In These Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Baltimore Sun* and *The Advocate*. He also contributed a chapter to *Losing It: The Virginity Myth*. John can be contacted at: john.ireland@yahoo.com.

The U.S.-Israeli “Somalia Plan”

IN HIS FIRST visit to the White House on May 23, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told President Bush that Israel will “devote six to nine months to find a Palestinian partner” before it pursues the unilateral “Convergence Plan.” It was an empty promise. Olmert knows that given the reality in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the probability of returning to the negotiation table is close to zero.

Since the ruling Fatah party lost the democratic elections to the Islamist party Hamas, much has changed in the Occupied Territories. Following Hamas’s electoral victory, Olmert asked foreign leaders to boycott the new Palestinian Authority (PA) until it complied with three conditions: 1) disarm Izzeddin al-Qassam and other paramilitary groups; 2) annul Hamas’ charter, which calls for the destruction of Israel; and 3) accept the agreements and obligations that the Palestinian Authority took upon itself when the Fatah party was in control.



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In Gaza City, public workers draw pay on June 5, 2006, the first time in three months.

Olmert's conditions are reasonable. And given Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Hania's recent statement that if Israel withdraws to the 1967 borders Hamas will be willing to sign a peace agreement based on an extended *hudnah* (truce), the first two conditions could easily become part of future negotiations rather than a condition for negotiations. Olmert's third demand, however, puts Israel in a thorny spot. After all, Israel, not the Palestinians, has been using the separation barrier in the past three years to execute a unilateral plan that contravenes all previous agreements. Thus, according to Olmert's logic, the international community would also need to boycott Israel in order to remain consistent.

Nonetheless, following U.S. pressure, the three other members of the Quartet—the United Nations, the European Union and Russia—agreed to follow the general thrust of Olmert's demands, and have cut off most of the foreign aid to the Palestinian Authority.

Even before the foreign aid was cut, 64 percent of the Palestinian inhabitants were living under the international poverty line of \$2.20 a day, while the World Bank reported that acute malnutrition affected 9 percent of Palestinian children. Since the aid amounts to almost one-third of the per capita gross national income in the West Bank and Gaza, the cuts could eventually lead to a famine.

Since February, when the foreign aid was cut, the Palestinian Authority has been unable to pay salaries to its 160,000 employees. These workers provide direct livelihood to over one million people (almost a third of the population), and if their salaries are not paid for a few more

months the Palestinian economy will totally collapse. Both Israel and the United States are now thinking of ways to alleviate the dire situation—after all, no wants to be blamed for producing a famine. Together they have adopted a scheme that could be called the “Somalia Plan.”

The idea is to transfer salaries directly to the bank accounts of those 90,000 PA workers who are employed by civil institutions like the education and health ministries. The remaining 70,000 Palestinians who work for one of numerous security apparatuses in the Occupied Territories will not receive salaries. This will keep the economy just above the famine level, leaving 70,000 armed men with nothing but frustration and anger.

Under such conditions, a struggle is sure to break out among the different Palestinian warlords over the scant resources in the Occupied Territories. Already, *Ha'aretz* has reported that dozens of bombs have been laid near houses or cars of senior Hamas officials and officers in the last few weeks, while homes and cars of Fatah senior officials and Preventive Security officers have also been booby-trapped. In some cases the bombs went off, causing injuries and damage.

If the existing skirmishes among the different factions develop into full-blown battle, it may very well be that certain segments of the Palestinian population will go hungry. Yet, it's the warlords or faction leaders, rather than Israel or the United States, who will be blamed for the human catastrophe. We are, in other words, witnessing Somalia in the making.

Members of the European Union have expressed “serious concern” about the deterioration in the humanitarian, economic and financial situation in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. But even though they have pledged to resume payments to the Palestinians, E.U. foreign policy chief Javier Solana hinted to *Ha'aretz* that resistance from the U.S. Congress might make it impossible to transfer the funds.

So it is not only that Israel and the United States are uninterested in abating the violent clashes among Palestinians. They do not seem to care that a civil war in the Occupied Territories will both engender immense suffering and destabilize the region for decades. In many ways, their policies are precipitating this—not coincidentally, but as part of the very logic informing the perpetual war on terror.

—Neve Gordon

act now



OPENING DOORS

The philanthropic Web site GlobalGiving has launched a competition called the GlobalGiving Open, which acts as a fundraising portal for humanitarian organizations and screens the projects for prospective donors. Currently in its second round, the Open accepts project proposals from around the world, which are then voted on by the GlobalGiving online community. The top three projects are awarded a donation that corresponds to the number of votes received and are spotlighted on www.globalgiving.org. First-round finalists included initiatives to provide nonviolence counseling in Ghanaian schools and free English classes for impoverished Cambodian children.

Are Primaries Going West?

IN AN EARLY bid to affect the 2008 race, the DNC is floating a primary reform proposal that it hopes will address the system's shortcomings. But is it enough?

On March 11, the DNC's Rules and Bylaws Committee voted in favor of a proposal set forth earlier by its Commission on Presidential Nomination, Timing and Scheduling that would expand the presidential nomination process with the intention of creating a more level playing field. Reformers hope to pull in greater numbers of minorities and labor constituents and mitigate the phenomenon of "front-loading"—a high concentration of early scheduled contests—by offering bonus delegates to those states that wait to hold their primaries.

Increased front-loading means that nominations are secured before most Americans have had the chance to vote at all. The University of Virginia's Center for Politics found that in the run-up to the 2000 election, George W. Bush and Al Gore had "all but locked up" their respective nominations by March 7—before voters in 33 states cast their ballots.

The DNC's solution is anything but radical, but it has raised the ire of New Hampshire's political elite. Under the proposal, Iowa would remain the first caucus, and New Hampshire the first primary, but there would be one or two "diverse caucuses" wedged in between. The plan also calls for possibly adding one or two primaries before the date after which any state may schedule a vote—currently set at February 5—but after New Hampshire.

The reforms aim to change a nomination system that rewards aggressive fundraising, media pandering and mindless handshaking in a handful of non-representative states.

Decrying what they call the "perpetual privilege" of Iowa and New Hampshire, Commission member Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.) and the Michigan Democratic Party had originally called for a series of six regional primaries (later modified to four), with a different region launching each presidential nominating season. "We shouldn't have a rule that some states are more equal than others," Levin told the DNC commission.

Since the DNC's announcement, state

representatives from Florida to Oregon have scrambled to stake their claim to the early primaries. By April 20, just six weeks after approving the measure, the DNC had reviewed presentations from 11 states and the District of Columbia.

As it stands, the problems with the current delegate selection process can be traced to an aberrant relationship that emerged between candidates and the mainstream press following a 1969 decision by the two parties to shift to a system of state primaries and caucuses. The resulting system put way too much leverage in the hands of the media, effectively negating healthy discourse among the politically savvy. Consequently, what happens today in Iowa and New Hampshire determines which candidates will ride the media groundswell to nomination and which will inevitably fall by the wayside.

In a September 2005 report, the 21-member, bi-partisan Commission on Federal Election Reform, co-chaired by former President Jimmy Carter and former Secretary of State James A. Baker III, concluded: "The presidential primary system is organized in a way that encourages candidates to start their campaigns too early, spend too much money, and allow as few as eight percent of the voters to choose the nominees. The primary schedule is in need of a comprehensive overhaul."

Carter and Baker called for congressional action if the political parties themselves do not act by 2008 and endorsed Levin's modified proposal.

A group called Democrats For The West would like to see that plan put into action. Since 2004 they've joined the Western Governors' Association, the Western States Democratic Chairs' Caucus, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, and at least one Republican governor—Jon Huntsman of Utah—in lobbying for a western regional primary. Huntsman has signed legislation rewriting the state's election law and has pledged \$850,000 to the project.

Spearheading the effort for the Democrats is veteran Party activist Michael Stratton, a member of the DNC Commission that made the original recommendation. "The future of the Democratic Party lies out west," Stratton says, arguing that if the DNC is going to add early primaries, it should be in areas with a strong Democratic tradition. "There are

a lot of people who are hungry to come to the process," Stratton says. "If we're adding states to the mix, I think we are all concerned that they be places where we can in fact win."

Throughout the summer, the DNC will continue to deliberate its primary reform project. The Rules and Bylaws Committee is scheduled to meet again in July to review the state proposals. In lieu of a regional primary, which now appears unlikely for 2008, Democrats For The West has appealed to the DNC to reserve at least one of the early slots for a western state.

—Christopher Moraff



JOHN THYS/AFEP/GETTY IMAGES

The Council of Europe held a press conference on the CIA's alleged illegal activities in Europe.

Europe Turns a Blind Eye to the CIA

THIRTEEN MEMBERS OF AN E.U. Parliament probe arrived in Washington on May 10, seeking answers to allegations of CIA-operated secret flights and prisons in Europe. A reported 1,000 CIA flights have secretly crisscrossed Europe since 9/11, often transporting "terror suspects" to be interrogated in other countries, such as Egypt, where prisoners are routinely tortured.

But when the Europeans came calling at the nation's capital, only low-level administration officials and four members of Congress (all Democrats) met with them face-to-face.

Stonewalling from the Bush administration should be no surprise, but European government officials haven't been

any more forthcoming. Javier Solana, the E.U.'s foreign policy chief, told the E.U. Parliament, "I have no information whatsoever that tells me with certainty that any of the accusations, allegations, rumors that have taken place in the last year's time are true."

Daniele Ganser, author of *NATO's Secret Armies: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe*, says European leaders are silent for a reason. "The European and the U.S. intelligence communities are mutually dependent on each other. The rendition programs of the CIA are not being openly criticized by the E.U. intelligence community because the E.U. countries fear that the U.S. will cease to share information."

"A number of E.U. governments have colluded by simply turning a 'blind eye,' failing to ask any questions," Tony Bunyan, the director of Statewatch, which monitors state and civil liberties in Europe, told the E.U. probe. "So that if asked they could say, 'No requests for transit or over-flying have been received.'"

In fact, according to the minutes of a meeting about the war on terror by European and U.S. officials in Athens in 2003,

the European Union and United States agreed to use "European transit facilities to support the return of criminals and inadmissible aliens."

Not only do European governments know more about CIA skullduggery on their soil, in some cases they are accomplices. Giovanni Claudio Fava, an Italian Socialist and member of the European Parliament inquiry, wrote in a draft report to E.U. lawmakers that it was "improbable that the abduction of Egyptian cleric Abu Omar on Feb. 17, 2003 in Milan by CIA agents was organized and carried out without the previous knowledge of Italian authorities and security service."

As the *Washington Post* reported in November, the CIA is also running secret detention centers in Eastern Europe. Human Rights Watch has named Romania and Poland as likely sites and charges that CIA planes made numerous flights between 2003 and 2004 from Afghanistan to the Szymany airport in north-eastern Poland. Meanwhile, the United States signed a deal with Romania in December to build a military base at the Mihail Kogalniceanu airfield on the Black Sea, which is where the secret CIA

site is thought to be located. Those claims have been backed by a fax intercepted by Swiss secret services from the Egyptian Foreign Ministry to their embassy in London, which stated that 23 Iraqi and Afghan prisoners were interrogated at the airfield.

Romania has denied the charges. The Polish parliament launched its own probe, but disclosed its findings only to a closed-door session of parliament last December. Nothing has happened since.

The CIA has also set up counter terrorist intelligence centers (CTICs) around the world, 16 in Europe. In 2005, the CIA's Deputy Director of Operations, Jose A. Rodriguez Jr., told a closed session of the House and Senate Intelligence Committee that more than 25 CTICs were responsible for more than 3,000 arrests.

Just what type of "cooperation" European intelligence agencies are providing to the CIA at the CTICs is, like everything with the spy agency, murky.

"The history of what the CIA did in Europe since its creation in 1947 is almost completely unknown," says Ganser. "It's a black spot in people's memory."

—Tony Wesolowsky

appall-o-meter

3.6 Will Pac Man Be Left Behind?

After years of anticipation, Christian video game designers have released their answer to the satanic gore of the popular "Grand Theft Auto" and "Halo" games. And that answer is: more satanic gore.

"Left Behind: Eternal Forces," unveiled at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles last month, is the video game companion to the wildly successful series of apocalyptic novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. As in the novels, the conceit of "Eternal Forces" is that the Rapture has happened, leaving a remnant of humanity behind to deal with the forces of the Antichrist. In the video game, the setting is, conveniently, New York City.

Funny thing is, the Antichrist's minions look more than a little like ... well, the usual suspects of fundagelical paranoia. Lucifer's army is called the Global Community Peacekeepers, and its arsenal includes black helicopters. Other foot soldiers of evil include a group of men who are—how to put this?—unusually well groomed and meticulously dressed. (Glad to report, there are no characters

with long noses or sidelocks.)

The good guys in "Eternal Forces," a.k.a. the Tribulation Force, roister merrily through the Big Apple, using the most advanced weaponry to waste evil ones (with each kill, they intone, "Praise the Lord"). Yet they lose a little "spirituality" each time they kill, so the godly forces must also replenish themselves with prayer. As the *Los Angeles Times* reports, the players have to do other goody-goody deeds, such as nurturing good guys and putting up with all manner of scriptural and musical interludes.

Anticipating what a drag America's Kleboldian youth will regard such drappiness, the game designers added a crucial feature: Players can switch over to the dark side. Sweet!

4.1 The Bride Wore A Merry Widow

Just when you think the \$85 billion wedding industry has reached the absolute nadir of taste, a new wrinkle is introduced that makes you wish for a deluge



of fire and brimstone to descend on the American middle class.

The *Wall Street Journal* reports that the latest rage among brides is to invite the wedding photographer into the boudoir while she and her attendants cavort in their skivvies. The *Journal* explained that the trend fits in with the modern bride's

urge to display her accomplishments, whether it be a choice bit of skin art or the results of months of gym work.

Opinion among the older generation is mixed. The *Journal* reports that one mother beamed as her daughter unzipped her jeans to show the camera her belly-button ring and special underpants inscribed with the word "bride" in sequins. Yet another oldster was shocked to accidentally barge in on her future daughter-in-law and 12 best friends posing lasciviously for a 20-something cameraman. Huffed the matron, "It was like a Playboy shoot in there!"

—Dave Mulcahey

Postmark Guantánamo

AFTER THE U.S. Senate voted last year to strip Guantánamo detainees of the right to habeas corpus, you'd think it would have dashed the hopes of the desperate prisoners that the world's greatest deliberative body would prove their salvation. But Saifullah Paracha is apparently an eternal optimist. In March, after 18 months in Guantánamo, Paracha, 58, decided to write a letter to 98 U.S. senators describing his plight. The senators haven't responded, though it's hard to blame them. They don't know the letters exist. The Department of Defense won't release them for delivery.

"He lived in the United States," says Paracha's lawyer G. T. Hunt. "He's a pro-American person. He believes in American justice. He believes that if he can get a hearing he'll get out."

In 1986, after studying and working in New York for 16 years, Paracha moved back to Pakistan, to Karachi where he and his wife raised four children and he managed several business ventures. In July 2003, Paracha traveled to Bangkok for what he thought was a meeting about a business opportunity. He never made it out of the airport. Masked men abducted him, taking him to Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan where he was interrogated and, according to Hunt, imprisoned in a cell with no toilet. His family spent a month with no idea of his whereabouts, until the International Committee of the Red Cross notified them he was in U.S. custody. After a year in Bagram, he was sent to Guantánamo in September 2004.

The United States believes that both Paracha and his son Uzair aided several Pakistani men alleged to be al Qaeda operatives. In November, Uzair was convicted in federal court of providing the operatives with "material support" and now faces up to 75 years in jail. Uzair maintains his innocence. He says he was an unwitting accomplice, merely helping his father's business associates with their U.S. immigration papers. Saifullah says he *does* have a relationship with the alleged terrorists, but only knew the men as investors, not al Qaeda operatives. Unlike his son, he hasn't been afforded an opportunity to make his case in court.

The rules guiding attorney/client cor-

snapshot



INDONESIA—Earthquake victims queue to receive medical attention provided by U.S. Marines in Bantul, June 4, 2006. Indonesia has deployed assessment teams to determine the exact number of casualties from the May 27 earthquake in Yogyakarta and Central Java provinces. (Photo by Adek Berry/AFP/Getty Images)

respondence at Guantánamo are frustratingly vague, lawyers for the detainees say, and the processing delays are maddening. Mail routinely arrives six months after it's been sent, if it arrives at all. "For months I sent him letters and he sent me letters and they were all just impounded," Hunt says. "Now, I think my letters get through but they take their sweet time about it."

The ostensible reason for the backlog is security. "The attorney/client communications go to a secure facility, which happens to be here in Washington," Hunt says. "And they can't leave there until the government clears it and says it's not sensitive and not classified."

In order to read Paracha's correspondence, Hunt must go to the secure location—"a grim featureless office, with blinds drawn 24 hours a day"—where he's allowed to read Paracha's letters to him before placing them back in a safe. Last month he saw the 98 letters, painstakingly copied in longhand, which Paracha had sent to him to review and distribute. But Hunt was told he couldn't remove them from the safe. He can't disclose what's in the letters—"it's a state secret," he quips—but says "the person with the right author-

ity could sit down, take a glance at them and then say, 'OK they can go out.'"

A Pentagon spokesperson wouldn't comment directly on Paracha's letters but said that over a six-month span in 2005, there were 10,000 pieces of mail sent to or from detainees. The detainees are "in close contact with family and friends if they choose to be," the spokesperson said.

After Hunt sent an email to his fellow Guantánamo lawyers about the detained letters, several of them contacted their senators to inform them they had mail the Pentagon wasn't letting them read.

This prompted an indignant letter from Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), who wrote to Rumsfeld on June 5, asking if the Department of Defense has a "written or unwritten policy prohibiting all persons detained at Guantánamo Bay from writing to, or communicating in any manner with, Members of Congress?"

If so, "please explain what legal authority supports such a policy."

On the bottom of the letter, Leahy scrawled in pen: "Is this really happening!"

Paracha must be asking himself the same question.

—Christopher Hayes

BY SUSAN J. DOUGLAS

Regime Change and Its Discontents



CAN BOOKS STILL make history? They used to. This seemed particularly true in the '60s, when Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, Michael Harrington's *The Other America* and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* launched, respectively, the environmental movement, the war on poverty and the women's movement. Of course, back then, presidents read books. (President Kennedy had his Science Advisory Committee read *Silent Spring* and

it corroborated Carson's findings, leading to the regulation and then banning of DDT.) Despite often powerful opposition to these authors and the movements they helped ignite, these books transformed American politics and the everyday lives of millions. And it is these social changes in particular—environmental protection, lifting people out of poverty, gender equity—that the Bush administration has assiduously worked to reverse.

But the Bush administration's worst addition to American life has been exploiting 9/11 to normalize the concept of never-ending war. In response, a minor publishing industry has emerged to produce anti-Bush and Iraq exposé books.

It is safe to assume that these books—*The Assassin's Gate* by George Packer, *Cobra II* by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, plus the earlier ones by Richard Clarke, Joseph Wilson and others—helped erode support for the war and Bush's policies. But will they push more Americans to the next, broader level, as *Silent Spring* or *The Other America* did? To make history, they would need to expand the existing antiwar movement into a wider campaign for the demilitarization of American politics and the economy.

Two new books, Stephen Kinzer's *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq* and James Carroll's *House of War: The Pentagon and the Disastrous Rise of American Power* make the more sweeping case that the militarization of the United States has corrupted our moral stature and our ability to conduct foreign policy in our own and other nations' interest. Laura Washington writes in more detail about the Kinzer book (See "Overthrow, Over and Over," page 15), and she rightly emphasizes one of the crucial contributions of *Overthrow*: its emphasis on the 110-year continuum of "regime change," and the ways in which the news media's episodic coverage of foreign policy cultivates amnesia about this long pattern of U.S. intervention.

Kinzer is also quite clear about the role of corporations in

regime change: Protecting the economic interests of American companies abroad has often driven invasions. Such corporations moved "a step beyond influencing policy makers," he writes, "they *became* policy makers." One way this happened was through the revolving door between key corporations and government positions. The exemplar is John Foster Dulles, lawyer to multinational corporations subsequently elevated to Secretary of State, and architect of the '50s coups in Iran and Guatemala that preserved, respectively, U.S. oil interests and the interests of United Fruit.

Kinzer's most important point is that regime change, in almost every case, undermines U.S. interests and influence. While moral qualms matter, what matters in the long run is that regime change doesn't work. James Carroll makes a related argument, in his magisterial *House of War*, a book

that is part history and part memoir (his father worked in the Pentagon). As an institution, he writes, the Pentagon has had a huge and deleterious influence on American life and politics. He chronicles how the increasingly rogue military es-

tablishment has made us artificially paranoid, frightened and vengeful, and ensured that the United States is, primarily, a militarized country. And the nuclear arms race, which Carroll documents from its inception, has, he argues, made our nation less, not more, secure.

With these two books, we have a broader critique of what Seymour Melman in *CounterPunch* and others have referred to as a "permanent war economy." They take on American militarism as a practice but also, just as importantly, as a mindset. And abandoning this mindset is no small challenge. Many Americans believe that militarism is necessary, even desirable. That vengeful strain in our culture has been powerfully reinforced by the military-industrial complex and many politicians. It will take the kind of massive, bottom-up consciousness-raising that Carson, Harrington and Freidan inspired to force it into remission.

Republicans have been masters of rhetorical inversion, labeling calls for higher taxation of the rich "class warfare," and the like. Kinzer and Carroll remind us that the biggest rhetorical distortion has been the assertion that militarism makes us secure. Democrats who still fear being called "girly men" when it comes to foreign policy should especially read these books. Kinzer and Carroll document, repeatedly, that U.S. interventions abroad have, as Kinzer notes, "actually weakened American security." If books can still make history, then these might start a movement for anti-militarism being the American *realpolitik* of the 21st century. ■

It will take an effort of massive, bottom-up consciousness-raising to force our culture's vengeful, militaristic mindset into remission.

LAURA S. WASHINGTON

Overthrow, Over and Over



THE OLD SAW goes, “the trend is your friend.”

Let’s try that one again.

Stephen Kinzer’s new book, *Overthrow: America’s Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq* (Times Books) puts the kibosh on that notion. Kinzer, a former *New York Times* foreign correspondent, deconstructs America’s disturbingly counterproductive foreign policy through competing critiques of the country’s imperialism and

its incompetence. His chronicle of America’s role in interventions into 14 sovereign nations posits failure and avarice as our lasting progeny.

It is a history lesson we can’t afford to forget.

Surfers, slackers, grass skirts and sunsets—that’s what Hawaii is all about, right? Think again. Think regime change. The 1893 overthrow of Hawaii’s monarch, Queen Liliuokalani, launched 110 years of American-led regime changes around the globe. Hawaii’s monarch was overthrown by a group of *haole* (the Hawaiian term for white Americans). These wealthy sugar planters teamed up with John L. Stevens, the American ambassador to Hawaii.

The “convenient” presence of the American gunboat Boston and 200 marines in Honolulu Harbor allowed the *haole* to lay Queen Liliuokalani low. Minister Stevens, in classic American diplomatese, offered a “request” to Boston Captain Gilbert Wiltse: “In view of the existing critical circumstances in Honolulu, indicating an inadequate legal force, I request you to land marines and sailors from the ship under your command for the protection of the United States legation and the United States Consulate and to secure the safety of American life and property.”

Hawaii was the first domino to fall. There have been 13 more, and we’re still counting: Cuba, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Guatemala, Honduras, Vietnam, Chile, Iran, Grenada, Panama, Afghanistan and Iraq. The circumstances are familiar, the parallels eerie.

Kinzer writes that both George W. Bush, who invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, and President William McKinley, who intervened in the Philippines, “were motivated by a deep belief that the United States has a sacred mission to spread its form of government to faraway countries. Neither doubted that the people who lived in these countries would welcome America as liberators.”

Talk to Rummy about it.

In a recent interview, Kinzer noted that Bush’s predilection for a “faith-based” approach has nothing to do with The Lord. Instead, Bush relies on a myopic “faith-based foreign policy based on what ‘we’ believe to be true, not what the facts argue.”

His book also mentions that “four CIA station chiefs in Tehran, Guatemala City, Saigon and Santiago explicitly warned against staging coups” in their respective nations.

What’s the point of spending billions for intelligence if the top dogs in the administration doggedly ignore it, or worse, send it back for rewrite? The CIA is surely misnamed: It’s really the Compromised Intelligence Agency.

The level of incompetence and venality is mind-boggling. Coups, insurrections, revolts and assassinations—our government has done it all. This trend is indeed not our friend.

In fact, as Kinzer notes, America’s century of regime change demonstrates that the United States is singularly unsuited to ruling foreign lands.

Americans lack a fundamental understanding of the string of failures that our country has

used to feather our own nest. It’s what Studs Terkel, America’s historian, calls our “National Alzheimer’s Disease.” We have no memory of history or its abiding lessons. What can we learn? What policy can we expect when contestants on American Idol capture more votes than any American presidential candidate in history? We have wrestled with this conundrum for more than a century. We have repeatedly been pinned to the mat.

Our dubious and flawed foreign policy is evident to everyone in the world but us. It’s a FUBU foreign policy: For Us, By Us. Americans are anesthetized by rampant consumerism and ideological nonsense jacked up with a healthy dollop of jingoism.

As a result, the checks and balances provided by an educated electorate have all but disappeared from American governance. The fact that public opinion cannot counter America’s affection for regime change is a fatal flaw.

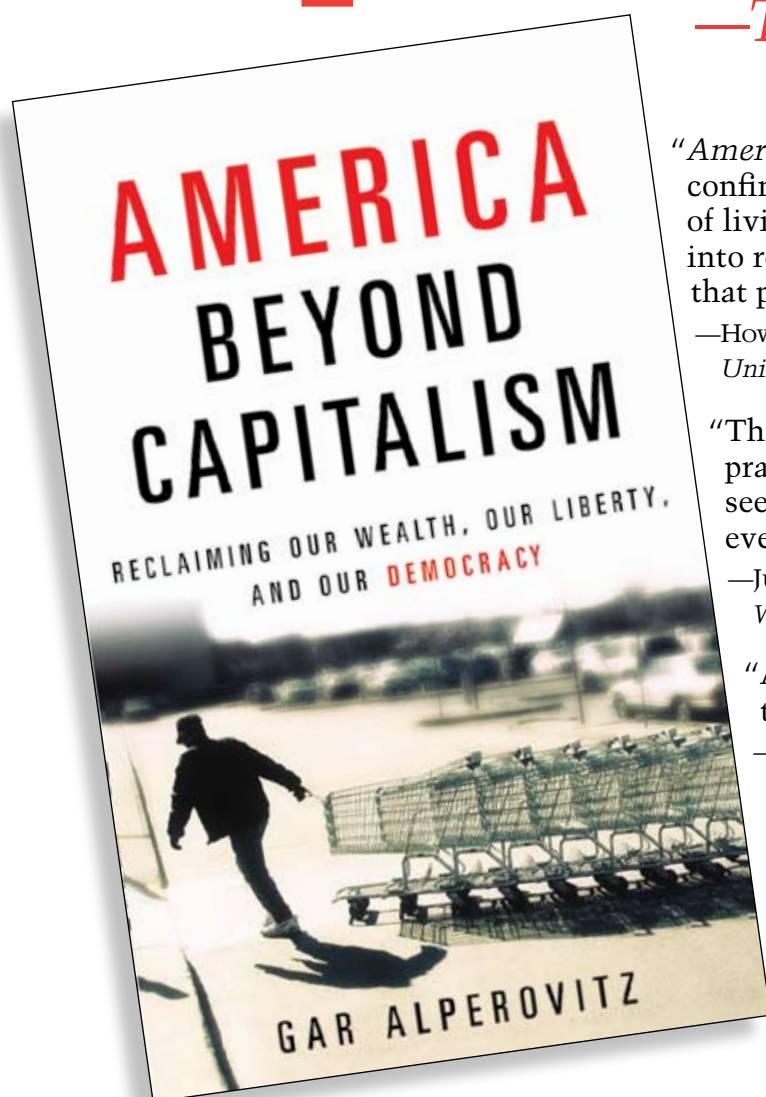
After Vietnam, our shell-shocked policymakers and military apparatchiks keenly felt the sting of the grassroots protests movements. The protests mitigated the government’s aggression. No one wanted “another Vietnam.” The cost was too high. But shelving the draft, moving toward Rumsfeld’s smaller, deadlier military and fighting a global terrorist threat have ushered in a scary new world.

Here’s hoping Kinzer’s book can reach an ahistorical America and alert us to the perils of our interventionist ways. ■

Hawaii was the first domino to fall. There have been 13 more and we’re still counting: Guatemala, Iran, Chile, Honduras, Grenada, Panama, Iraq ...

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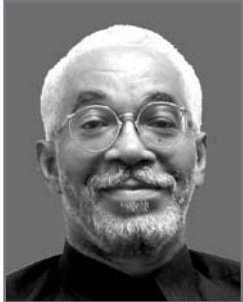
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BY SALIM MUWAKKIL

Diplomatic Hypocrisy in the Middle East



IN MAY, PRESIDENT George W. Bush and an adoring Congress offered lavish support for a unilateral plan by Israel Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to set Israel's final permanent borders. The plan involves annexing large portions of the occupied West Bank, including highly contested land near the city of Jerusalem, and building a wall enclosing the expanded Jewish state in a secure bastion. Doing so would completely negate the so-called

"road map" agreement once lauded as the surest path to a two-state solution for the Palestinians and Israelis.

At the same time, the United States and the European Union have withdrawn their support of the Palestinian Authority because voters elected Hamas members to represent them. Hamas refuses to abandon violent resistance to Israeli occupation and even denies Israel's right to exist. Hamas' behavior is hard to condone, but this disparate treatment is troubling to me.

Perhaps it's a product of my American upbringing. After all, throughout my life, I've seen at least a dozen films and heard many tales lauding the heroic acts of the French and Polish resistance to the Nazi occupation of World War II, while deriding France's dreaded Vichy regime, which collaborated with the Nazis. We now use quisling, the last name of Vidkun Quisling, the Norwegian president who collaborated with the Nazis, to define treason of a particularly despicable kind.

Today, however, the U.S. government and its media handmaidens insist we must despise the Palestinian, Iraqi and Afghani resistance fighter and embrace the occupiers and their collaborators. Today's occupiers argue that their actions are necessary to insure national security, relieve human suffering and bring democracy to these countries. But we should recall that all of history's occupiers justified their actions with similarly haughty motives.

We now demonize those rebellious spirits we once celebrated. Have we forgotten that it's the very act of occupation that is the point of contention, not the occupier's identity? This disparate treatment of the Palestinians seems hypocritical, as does punishing them for electing Hamas representatives, even as we trumpet our dedication to democracy.

One reason for this change of heart may be that the Bush administration has defined these contemporary resistance fighters as enemies in the war on terrorism. The term has

become a staple of contemporary discourse. But the definition of "terrorism" could mean many things: targeting civilians for violence, trying to intimidate by terrorizing, or perhaps simply asymmetrical warfare, etc. Although definitions vary, few dispute that terrorism is a tactic, not an agent. A war on terrorism is actually an oxymoron: a war on war.

The Bush administration's war on terrorism is really a conflict with a small clique of radical Muslims who have decided to wage asymmetrical warfare against U.S. interests. A closer look reveals these radicals are progeny of people formerly colonized by European powers, and most of their grievances derive from colonialism's legacy.

They once framed those grievances in a secular context. The Pan-Arab nationalism of Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nasser, Libya's Muammar Gaddafi and Yasir Arafat's Palestine Lib-

eration Organization (PLO), as well as the Baath parties of both Syria and Iraq, was the most coherent expression of anti-colonial resistance in the region.

But these secular ideologies (many informed by socialist ideals) failed to provide real solutions to their problems.

Some of that failure was due to U.S. intervention in the domestic affairs of any nation that threatened the West's access to its resources. The United States has a bad habit of interfering when the profits of its corporations are threatened.

The Iranian revolution of 1979 that ousted the U.S.-sponsored Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in favor of Ayatollah Khomeini heralded the emergence of a new paradigm of anti-colonial resistance in the Muslim world. Nationalist radicals adopted Islam as an animating ideology.

The Palestinian struggle against Israeli occupation was one of the last anti-colonial movements to undergo this religious conversion. But that changed in September 2000 when Ariel Sharon, who then was leader of the Israel opposition, led a security force of 1,000 to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, a venerated Muslim site. The visit set off a chain of events that exploded into the "Al-Aqsa Intifada." During this period, Islamist resistance groups like Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah began gaining traction on secular groups like the PLO and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

As punishment for Hamas' electoral success, the European Union and United States (as well as other governments) have halted payments to the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian people are now in a crisis for exercising their democratic franchise and voting to resist occupation. If only they had a political option like the Vichy regime. ■

Why are Palestinians being punished for electing Hamas representatives as we trumpet our dedication to democracy in the Middle East?

THE FIRST STONE

BY JOEL BLEIFUSS

Was the Presidential Election Stolen?



ON JUNE 2, Rolling Stone published a lengthy article by Robert J. Kennedy, Jr., “Was the 2004 Election Stolen?” That article echoes the title of a book that Steven F. Freeman and I have written that has just been published by Seven Stories Press,

Was the 2004 Presidential Election Stolen? Exit Polls, Election Fraud, and the Official Count.

We provided Kennedy with an early copy of our book and he cites it when discussing the discrepancy between the exit polls, which indicated that John Kerry won, and the official count, which deemed George W. Bush the victor. That Rolling Stone article has moved discussion about the 2004 election back into the national agenda.

A particularly lively debate has occurred on Salon.com, where on June 3, Farhad Manjoo attempted to demolish Kennedy’s article. Both Kennedy and Freeman, my co-author, then published formal responses. Freeman pointed out that while Manjoo’s article is rife with problems, he completely misses the boat when considering exit polls.

What follows is an excerpt from our new book Was the 2004 Presidential Election Stolen? Exit Polls, Election Fraud, and the Official Count.

EXIT POLLS CAN provide a wealth of information when they are analyzed in an informed way. They are a vital tool to ensure election integrity. The best use of the exit polls is not to oppose or replace the official count, but rather to serve as an alarm system to ensure democratic process.

It may turn out to be the case that the most accurate count in the 2004 presidential election was the exit-poll result. But the point isn’t to have to choose now between the exit-poll re-

sult and the official count. When exit polls contradict rather than confirm the official count, other parts of the machinery of democracy need to be activated—including the free press, which has the skills and the responsibility to investigate, and nonpartisan government bodies, which, through an entirely different array of methods, also have the skills and a civic mandate to investigate.

Our investigations lead us to conclude that we have little reason to trust the official results in the 2004 U.S. presidential election. Few jurisdictions provided compelling verification that votes were counted as cast. Sixty-four percent of Americans voted on direct recorded electronic (DRE) voting machines or optical-scan systems, both of which are, to different degrees, vulnerable to interference through hacking or programming fraud. In most cases Americans are being asked, in effect, to place our absolute trust in voting-machine corporations that have failed to meet minimal expectations of impartiality, honesty, freedom from conflict of interest and transparency. Why haven’t the companies that produce electronic voting machines made them so that they provide an audit trail (which is easily achieved through paper records)? And why haven’t they allowed government regulators to inspect their software? The answer to both these questions is that no one has effectively demanded that they do so.

As is the case in any system where there are incentives to cheat, random audits must be conducted to keep voting machine companies and office holders honest. In Ohio, the Green Party paid for a recount of Ohio’s ballots, but rather than acting in accord with Ohio law that counties choose a random sample of 3 percent of the total votes cast, Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell interpreted “random” to mean a sample of the

county’s choosing. As American Statistical Association President Fritz Schueren put it, this is “analogous to IRS agents allowing taxpayers to choose for themselves the items on their tax returns to be audited.”

None of the explanations given thus far explained why the official count differed so dramatically from the exit-poll results. The discrepancy must be investigated impartially and by institutions that can be trusted to conduct such investigations.

THERE IS STILL hope. New legislation has been proposed and important lawsuits and legal actions are underway. The most significant proposed national legislation is Rep. Rush Holt’s (D.-N.J.) Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act, Bill HR 550, which would require the use of voter-verified paper record in audits and recounts. HR 550 would also prohibit the use of undisclosed software and wireless communication devices in voting systems.

Because elections are administered by the states rather than the federal government, most of the other significant developments are at the state level, with closely watched reforms proposed in California, New Mexico and critical swing states such as Ohio, Pennsylvania and Florida.

Finally, DRE voting machines themselves continue to be scrutinized, even as one of the major vendors, Diebold, faces a securities lawsuit and rumors that it may discontinue its voting-machine division. In Leon County, Florida, the supervisor of elections, Ion Sancho, authorized a “test” of his Diebold voting system to see if election results could be altered using only a

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memory card. Harri Hursti, a computer programmer from Finland, facilitated the test, in which voters vote on a touch-screen machine and also recorded their votes separately. By using a doctored memory card in the machine, Hursti was able to produce results completely different from what the test voters intended. When, following the test, Diebold and other vendors then refused to sell new voting machines to Leon County, voting rights groups across the country wrote to Florida officials in support of Sancho.

Americans shouldn't have to presume a fair count. The mainstream media has, to all effects and purposes, established (to borrow the phrase of the great American novelist, Joseph Heller) a Catch-22 for election investigation. No investigation without proof—but then, what proof can be had without investigation?

The American public has a right to be skeptical about whether there was a fair count in the last presidential election, and to have their skepticism proven wrong by overwhelming evidence. In any functioning democracy, this test would consistently be met without stirring controversy.

ABSENCE OF SCRUTINY does not make a democracy function; democratic processes do. In the case of the 2004 presidential election, the absence of reporting on the election controversy has left the public highly suspicious. A Zogby Interactive online poll one month after the election revealed that 28.5 percent of respondents thought that questions about the accuracy of the official count in the election were “very valid”, and another 14 percent thought that concerns were “somewhat valid.” In other words, 42 percent of all Americans had immediate concerns about what had happened on Nov. 2, 2004.

During his recent confirmation hearings, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts was forced to acknowledge the right to vote “is preservative of all other rights.” Without the power to elect our representatives, and especially, to vote out of office those who misuse power—ultimately we have no rights at all.

In *Battle For Florida*, Lance DeHaven-Smith, a professor of public policy at Florida State University, writes, “As an expert on Florida government and policy, I had been ... aware that Florida's elec-

tion laws were being undermined and subverted by the very people who were responsible for assuring their proper execution.” However, he says he was not too upset by this because he expected the dispute over the Florida 2000 election to lead to reforms in the electoral processes similar to those that arose from the flawed presidential elections in 1800 and 1876. He writes: “What alarmed me was not the malfeasance and misfeasance of high officials but rather the inability of both the public and the media ... to conduct a postmortem of the election fiasco, determine who was responsible for the electoral breakdown, hold officials accountable for any crimes, and enact constitutional and statutory reforms as necessary to root out corruption and to correct flaws in the system.”

He goes on to note that the United States appears to be following the path of ancient Rome and Grece. Referring to the two great democracies of antiquity, he writes: “The first step of degeneration was a subversion of law in the name of higher values, such as stability and national security; and the decline into tyranny went unchecked by institutionalized oversight bodies, which we now refer to as the courts, because these bodies themselves became involved in the rivalry fueling the downward spiral.”

The courts and the media are widely recognized as the bulwarks of democracy. But the Supreme Court in *Bush v. Gore* inserted partisan politics into the judicial process and derailed the democratic process, while the U.S. media has, since that ruling, systematically avoided any reporting on serious election dysfunction.

But when we place the blame only on the media and our national oversight bodies, we are too complacent. A nation depends also on its professional and educated elite to protect, or at least speak out about, abuse of power. But so few of the professionals and academics, who sit comfortably atop the status quo, have been willing to take responsibility as individual citizens. And in the end the question does rest with the citizenry, all the citizenry. How far are we going to let things go? How hard are we willing to fight for our democratic principles and processes?

If meaningful change is to come, it will be because something changed in us all, bringing a new wave of skepticism, of hope, of honest inquiry, of anger and of common purpose. ■



Philip Anderson votes with his son Philip on Nov. 2, 2004 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

MIKE SIMONS/GETTY IMAGES

WELCOME TO THE MEDIA REVOLUTION

BY JESSICA CLARK AND TRACY VAN SLYKE



On September 29, 2005, in a conference room on the 17th floor of a Philadelphia office building, blocks away from Independence Hall, members of a newly formed network, The Media Consortium, gathered to reshape the national media landscape.

To a casual observer, the situation may not have looked much different than any other business meeting. Flipboards and sheets of paper filled with scrawling penmanship were scattered across the room. Tables overflowed with laptops, cell phones, Blackberries, notebooks and half-empty cups of coffee that had seen numerous refills throughout the two-day meeting.

By the end of the meeting the consortium members were clustered around an 11 x 17 sheet of printer paper. One by one we added our names to the Declaration of the Independent Media. Among the 25 signatories were editors, publishers and directors of various media organizations including *The American Prospect*, *The Nation*, *Mother Jones*, *The Progressive*, *The Washington Monthly*, AlterNet.org, Grist.org, Link TV, Free Speech TV, Air America, New American Media and *In These Times*.

The declaration reads, in part:

We, the makers and providers of progressive, independent journalism, declare our intent to form among ourselves a new non-profit association, The Media Consortium. ... We believe it is possible and necessary to seize the current moment and change the debate in this country on our terms. Therefore, the mission of The Media Consortium is of vital importance—not just for the furtherance of our individual enterprises, but for the health of American democracy.

While the language lacks the grandeur of “We hold these truths to be self-evident,” the declaration represents a revolutionary shift in the world of progressive media. “We recognized that there were things we had to do together, that we couldn’t do by ourselves. Our future depends on it,” says Steve Katz, project director of The Media Consortium and associate publisher of *Mother Jones*.

Why should media be a priority, with Iraq in a civil war, living wage jobs continuing to spiral downward and the

Earth's environment heating up? Because media serves as the forum for all political debate. The right has learned to use the media to its political advantage. Now, progressives must reclaim their place in the national conversation.

We documented the beginnings of the progressive media network in our May 9, 2005 issue, "Making Connections." Here we report on the unprecedented collaborations fostered by this emerging media network in the past year and explore the opportunities and challenges it now faces.

Members of The Media Consortium, who make up a large segment of this network, understand that in order to shift the national debate progressive media will need to break through to a larger audience. The end goal: to develop a sustainable progressive media infrastructure that can inform and influence public opinion, encourage grassroots action and create political change. But to do so media outlets and media-focused organizations need three things: support from each other, investment in core journalistic efforts, and a strategy for moving into new digital media that facilitate rapid response initiatives and audience interaction.

"We're trying to redefine who we are to reach the audience of the 21st century," Katz says. "Progressive media is to the progressive audience as classic rock is to the radio audience. We know we can do better and we know people are looking for good journalism and a progressive point of view. We're also looking at the platforms in which people are getting their information. Technology is changing and we need to change with it."

Jan Schaffer, a professor of journalism at the University of Maryland, told a conference of editors in October 2004, "The potential of new media is not simply more noise—but information experiences and meaningful interaction—and even, I would suggest, entirely new kinds of civic participation."

Media is the movement

Reinventing progressive media is an uphill battle. Progressives are competing against a ruthless right-wing media machine and a dominant commercial media sector that has honed audience-distraction tactics.

Many new progressive media projects have arisen in direct response to the dominance of the right's media apparatus. As Rob Stein, David Brock

and Eric Alterman, among others, have documented, right-wing funders and ideologues have over the past three decades created their own successful cadre of media and messaging organizations, from think tanks to magazines to radio and television outlets. They have infiltrated the mainstream media, rallying conservatives across the country.

"What conservatives thus enjoy," writes Paul Waldman in *Being Right is Not Enough: What Progressives Must Learn from Conservative Success*, "is a wide-ranging, multimedia apparatus that when tapped will vibrate like a gigantic tuning fork."

In response to this distortion of the public debate, many media activists have focused on the problems of the mainstream commercial media. After the Telecommunications Act of 1996 gutted regulatory limits on media ownership, policy reform organizations like Free Press and the Center for International Media Action organized public campaigns against media consolidation. Monitoring groups, like Media Matters for America, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), and Women in Media and News (WIMN) serve as watchdogs, alerting their members and the media to inaccuracies, conservative bias, sexism and racism in both news and entertainment programming.

Booking and distribution organizations like the Institute for Public Accuracy and the Mainstream Media Project act as media liaisons, attempting to funnel progressive activists, academics and pundits into the mainstream media. Most recently, progressive "framing" efforts and think tanks like the Center for American Progress have used their research to shape messages that define and promote progressive values to a wider audience.

Such media activism is crucial to reshaping the country's media landscape. But pointing out the flaws in the mainstream media is not enough.

Progressive media outlets are critical agents of social change. Progressive magazines and books provide the research and long-range analysis needed to support political movements. Radio and television humanize a story and bring it to a mass audience. And blogs have now begun to serve as a powerful rapid response system.

The Media Consortium provides formal and informal support to progressive media-makers and is distinguished as

much by its cross-media approach as it is by its commitment to building a progressive movement.

Despite good intentions, however, such efforts can get complicated. At one of The Media Consortium's brainstorming sessions, a scrawled question on a flip board summed up what was on the mind of many: "Who's in, who leads, and who gets \$?"

Who's in, who's out

Like much of the progressive movement, media organizations have historically developed in isolation or competition with one another. They thrive on debate. Consequently, a unified progressive narrative has not developed. An influential contingent of self-identified progressives maintains that this must change. They argue that fracturing media and activism into single-issue "silos" pulls funding and energy away from the building of a larger progressive media movement.

"An opening now exists, as it hasn't in a very long time, for the Democrats to be the visionaries," writes Michael Tomasky, the editor of *The American Prospect*, in the magazine's May 3 issue. "To seize this moment, the Democrats need to think differently—to stop focusing on their grab bag of small-bore proposals that so often seek not to offend and that accept conservative terms of debate. And to do that, they need to begin by looking to their history, for in that history there is an idea about liberal governance that amounts to more than the million-little-pieces, interest-group approach to politics that has recently come under deserved scrutiny and that can clearly offer the most compelling progressive response to the radical individualism of the Bush era."

Such statements set off alarm bells for the groups being dismissed as "special interests." Too often, progressive writers and pundits believe that because they are "enlightened" about issues such as racism, sexism and everything else, they have the expertise to be the public voices on those issues. Yet this argument misses the fact that communities invested in specific issues often respond best to messages internal to their own culture and communities. This does not mean that media always has to be segregated by cause or audience, but cultural awareness is important when progressives attempt

to integrate different voices and perspectives into the movement.

Other media activists resist top-down infrastructure building altogether, finding the project of adopting commercial forms and tactics for their media projects antithetical to their mission of empowering the disenfranchised and critiquing

to invest in circulation, marketing and new technology. (See “The New Funding Heresies,” page 28.)

Politically committed funders must work with and support media organizations to develop business models that can succeed in the long run. Progressive media infrastructure cannot exist with-

By linking up with each other, media outlets can cross-promote, reach new audiences and build momentum around an issue. The battle over network neutrality, detailed in the map on page 25, is one current example of the power of the budding progressive media network. This campaign created a groundswell of coverage around

Honoring diversity and supporting democratic participation are central to the progressive project.

capitalist culture. Instead they advocate teaching these communities to create their own media. “Unless we do that, we’re not going to be shifting power, which is what social justice is about,” says Aliza Dichter of the Center for International Media Action.

Honoring diversity and supporting democratic participation are central to the progressive project. In order to succeed, members of the progressive media network must develop better channels of communication between issue-specific movements and the media outlets attempting to articulate the larger progressive vision.

This is exactly what the right did, argue Jean Hardisty and Deepak Bhargava in a fall 2005 *Nation* article, “Wrong About the Right.” “There is no monolithic ‘conservative’ movement but rather a plethora of ideologies successfully harnessed together in a grand coalition. The implication for progressives is that we ought to tolerate a diversity of views and think strategically about how to align them to common purpose rather than seek a homogeneity we falsely ascribe to conservatives.”

Models for success

While crucial coordination takes shape, such efforts are hindered by the fact that most progressive media projects remain small and underfunded. Large-scale foundation funding for media projects has historically been funneled to public media such as PBS and NPR, or to issue-oriented media campaigns. In recent years, funders have become enamored with new technology initiatives. Foundations have avoided directly supporting overtly political independent media outlets. The right has no such qualms, understanding that providing general operating support strengthens media outlets, allowing them

out media organizations. A table will not stand without legs.

Seeing nonprofits continue to struggle, a new generation of progressive media projects has begun to experiment with private-sector business models, with varying levels of success. Such outlets operate with what funders call a “double bottom line.” The Investors’ Circle, an organization that matches funders and financial institutions with socially responsible projects, explains how this works:

Mainstream media companies operate within both an intensely competitive industry and the unforgiving conventional financial markets. ... [but] both philanthropic and private market financial entities are increasingly paying attention to niche media that attend to both the financial bottom line and social impact.

Progressive media outlets have also started looking to their commercial counterparts, like the Washington Post Company, for clues about how to amplify stories. In addition to the flagship newspaper, the corporation owns *Newsweek*, the *Post-Newsweek* family of television stations, the CableOne systems that provide Internet services to subscribers in several states, and an online publishing subsidiary, Washingtonpost.Newsweek Interactive, which manages WashingtonPost.com, Newsweek.com, Slate.com and Budget Travel Online. Owning these cross-media properties allows the company to promote products and stories across a variety of platforms, a strategy known as “vertical integration.”

Many critics have noted that such integration involves consolidation that commercializes and dumbs down the media. In the progressive media sector, however, vertical integration operates not through ownership, but through organizing.

a policy issue that would have otherwise passed unnoticed.

Similarly, the progressive media network has come together to promote blogger and attorney Glenn Greenwald’s new book, *How Would a Patriot Act?* This first book by Working Assets Publishing, released in May, represents an experiment in rapid-response publishing and grassroots promotion. Conservative publishers, like Regnery Publishing, have made a mint and generated a wave of “experts” by aggressively promoting their books, like Ramesh Ponnuru’s *The Party of Death: The Democrats, the Media, the Courts, and the Disregard for Human Life*, to the conservative base via right-wing media. They sidestep the mainstream book reviews and market their books like political campaigns. Marjory G. Ross, Regnery’s publisher, told the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, “We don’t really care about reviews because we want sparks to fly. That’s much easier on radio and TV than in print.”

Brought to market in just 12 weeks *How Would a Patriot Act?* hit the top of the Amazon charts before it was even published and debuted on the *New York Times* bestseller list in early June. The book was pushed by many progressive blogs, but older progressive media, however, are still a bit hesitant to jump into the fray. “It’s been like pulling teeth trying to get progressive media outlets to pay attention to the book,” Greenwald says.

Adopting the integration model, Robert Greenwald, the director of *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price Living*, is pioneering a new model for distributing documentary films through grassroots channels. Journalists like Farai Chideya, pundits like Al Franken, comedians like Janeane Garofalo, academics like Juan Cole and politicians like Al Gore have become multimedia masters, spreading their ideas through

progressive and commercial print media, radio, online outlets, books, television appearances and speaking engagements.

Collaborations among members of the media network can take many forms. Media outlets with a traditional journalistic mission may prefer to confine their work with other publications to syndication and cross-promotion. More overtly political media projects have already moved to merge content production with grassroots organizing. The YearlyKos conference, which takes place as this issue goes to press, exemplifies this trend. Organized by the readers and diarists at the popular progressive blog, DailyKos, observers have said this could be a watershed moment for the “netroots.”

The next frontier

All stripes of media are attempting to connect with the growing broadband audiences. The change is “happening in every media sector, television, motion, sound media” says Peter Ledyen, director of the think tank New Politics Institute. He identifies the most recent tipping point as September 2005, when news about Apple’s video iPods began to make the rounds. News of this new platform sparked a wave of investment into broadband content like short films and news clips. Ever since, Ledyen says, it has been “a headlong, pell-mell, dizzy kind of rush. It’s very exciting and quite scary.”

He notes that progressives have an advantage in this new environment. The majority of the people at the front end of these new technologies have a progressive worldview and inhabit the coastal blue cities and urban hubs. “Companies innovating in this space are often run by out-and-out avowed progressive types,” he says.

Take “The Young Turks,” a trio of liberal radio hosts that can be heard on Sirius Satellite Radio and on the Web. They are pioneering the next frontier of online broadcasting. After a failed attempt to get MSNBC to pick up their radio show as a liberal TV show, the Young Turks went a different route. With the support of investors they bought digital cameras and rented studio space. As the *Los Angeles Times* reported, “In mid-December, they began streaming their three-hour show every weekday on their website ... billing it as the first live Internet talk show,” writes Matea Gold. “In the process, they’ve helped pioneer the rapidly developing field of online programming—from webcasts to video

An Integrated Strategy for Social Change

PRODUCED JOINTLY BY IN THESE TIMES (WWW.INTHESISTEMS.COM), PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATORS NETWORK (WWW.PROGRESSIVECOMMUNICATORS.NET), AND THE YOUTH MEDIA COUNCIL (WWW.YOUTHMEDIACOUNCIL.ORG).



At one time, each sphere of the progressive media infrastructure functioned within its own area of expertise. But due to a changing political landscape, both individual organizations and movement networks need to adopt and integrate the skills and strategies of other spheres. The overall goal: to reach, educate and motivate audiences to create political and social change.

podcasts and vlogs (the video version of a blog)—now delivering content that traditionally would have had to survive the television development season and pass the muster of network executives to find an audience.”

“The Young Turks” are part of an explosion of efforts to bypass network and cable channels and develop progressive content for emerging satellite, dish and digital broadcast platforms. Other efforts include more established broadcasters like LinkTV and Free Speech TV, online projects like PoliticsTV and The Real News, an effort to establish a progressive cable channel.

Traditional media—print, radio and television—are struggling to balance staying true to the tenets of journalism, with reaching new audiences with interactive features and, in some cases, the ideologically aggressive tone that has come to characterize much of the mainstream news environment.

This rapid technological evolution is challenging print publishers. But, as Arianna Huffington writes in a recent blog post on Huffingtonpost.com, “It’s not an either-or proposition. Despite drops in circulation, print magazines are not going

the way of the dodo bird (indeed, there are over 5,000 more magazine titles on sale now than there were in 1988)—and the 75,000 new blogs appearing every day won’t be the death knell of Big Media. Instead, if the mainstream media play their cards right, the new media could provide a transfusion of energy, passion, and immediacy that will alter—and ultimately save—them. Provided they keep adapting to the changing technologies—and, more importantly, the changing audience.” The same can be said for the progressive media.

In order to flourish, progressive media makers must understand and pursue this new online audience, as the rise of the political blogosphere attests. Yet even the bloggers must contend with the hegemony of the mainstream media.

In “The Triangle: The Limits of Blog Power” on Salon.com, Peter Daou writes, “Simply put, without the participation of the media and the political establishment, the netroots alone cannot generate the critical mass necessary to alter or create conventional wisdom ... That is not to say that blogs can’t be the first to draw attention to an issue, as they often do, but the half-life of an online buzz can be measured

The Emerging Progressive M

THE EMERGING NETWORK

Over the past year, media organizations and outlets have begun to work with newsmakers to move progressive issues and narratives into the national debate. New technologies and distribution methods are also expanding the progressive media audience.

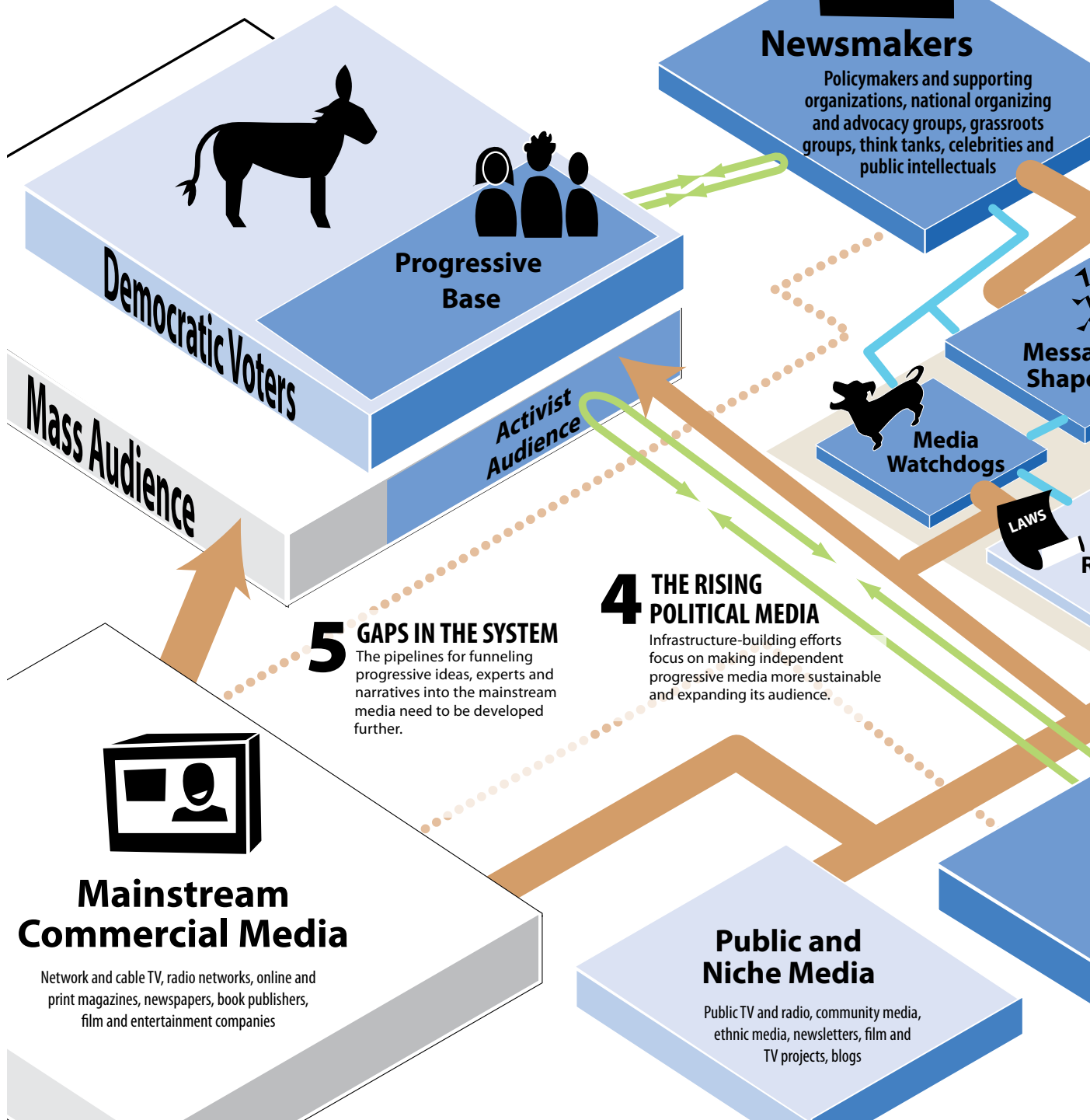
1 MAKING THE NEWS

Agenda setters in the beltway and progressive organizations generate action, media alerts and research to drive the news cycle.



News-makers

**Polymakers and supporting
organizations, national organizing
and advocacy groups, grassroots
groups, think tanks, celebrities and
public intellectuals**



4 THE RISING POLITICAL MEDIA

Infrastructure-building efforts focus on making independent progressive media more sustainable and expanding its audience.

5 GAPS IN THE SYSTEM

The pipelines for funneling progressive ideas, experts and

The pipelines for funneling progressive ideas, experts and narratives into the mainstream media need to be developed further.

Mainstream Commercial Media

Network and cable TV, radio networks, online and print magazines, newspapers, book publishers, film and entertainment companies

Public and Niche Media

Public TV and radio, community media,
ethnic media, newsletters, film and
TV projects, blogs

Media Network 2006

KEY

Progressive
Allies
Neither

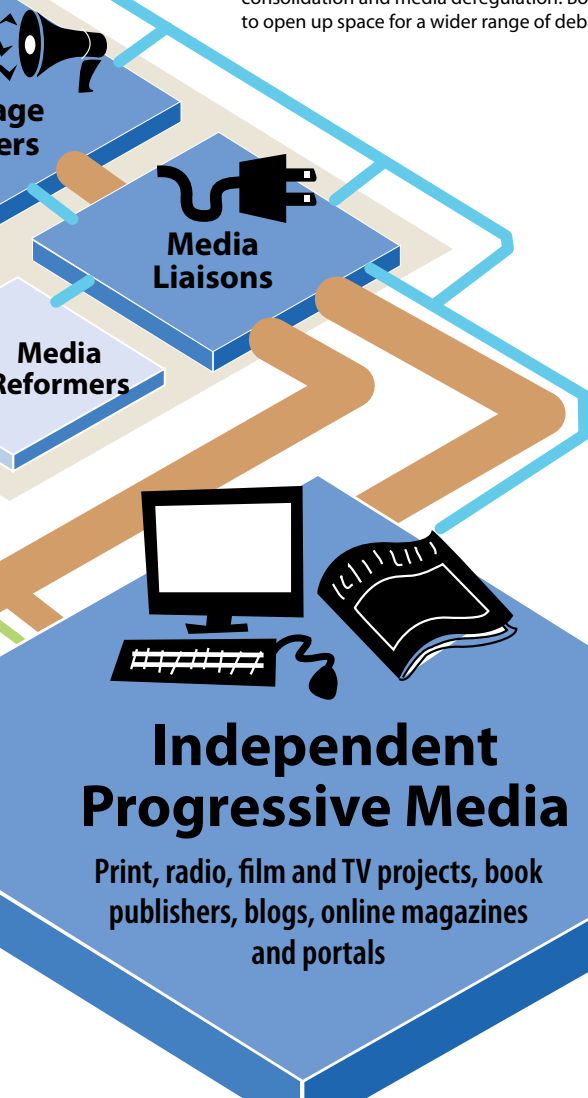
Issues & Narratives
Developing infrastructure
Missing Links
Feedback Loop

2 MOVING THE NEWS

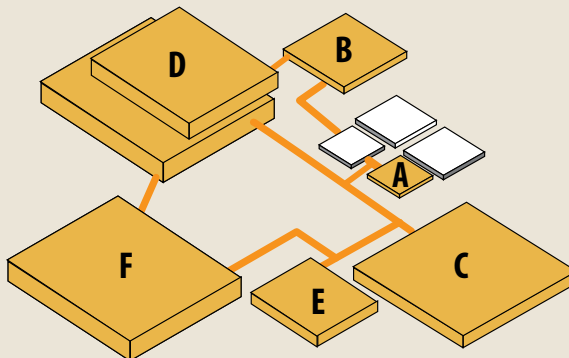
Message shapers work to frame arguments and articulate progressive values. Media liaisons and PR professionals connect experts, activists and pundits with a wider audience.

3 WATCHDOGS AND REFORMERS

Media watchdogs identify media misinformation, bias and prejudice. Media reform organizations work across the political divide to fight corporate consolidation and media deregulation. Both help to open up space for a wider range of debate.



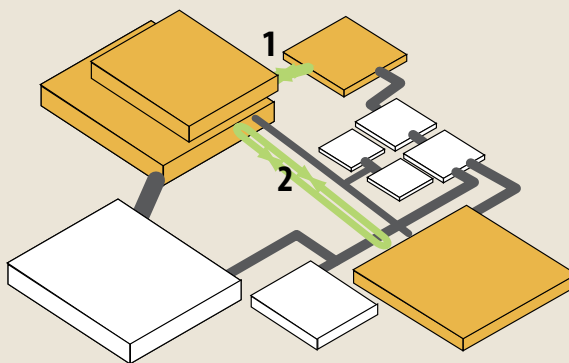
The network in action



How an issue moves through the network

EXAMPLE: INTERNET FREEDOM— the fight to protect “network neutrality,” or a free and open Internet.

A) Media reform organizations like Free Press and the Center for Digital Democracy along with **B)** newsmakers like Common Cause and Consumers Union sounded the first alarms about corporate threats to Internet freedom. **C)** Independent media like *The Nation* and AlterNet.org provided ongoing coverage. Free Press, MoveOn.org and top independent progressive bloggers then formed the SaveTheInternet.com coalition. Comprised of more than 700 organizations, the coalition pushed **D)** 750,000 calls, letters and petition signatures to Congress. Within a month **E)** public media like National Public Radio and **F)** mainstream outlets like the *New York Times* reported on the issue. The network did its job: Soon after, there was bipartisan congressional legislation that threatened to derail industry plans.



How the network relates to the audience

FEEDBACK LOOP NO. 1: The Progressive Base and the Newsmakers. The progressive base gives newsmakers money, opinions, votes, praise and protest. In return, newsmakers represent their constituencies, provide action items, produce research and develop policy proposals.

FEEDBACK LOOP NO. 2: The Activist Audience and the Independent Progressive Media. All audiences provide media outlets with feedback as well as financial support through subscriptions, donations or advertising clout. In return, media outlets provide news and entertainment as well as platforms for interaction. The activist audience distinguishes itself by providing independent progressive media with citizen activism, grassroots research and media monitoring efforts. In turn, the political independent media creates a community of shared values and provides its audience with information, analysis and action items.

BY JESSICA CLARK AND TRACY VAN SLYKE. DESIGN: MIKHAELA REID
VISIT WWW.INTHESYSTEMS.COM/MEDIAMAP FOR MORE INFORMATION.

The Progressive Media Network and Its Allies

NEWSMAKERS

Policymakers and Supporting Organizations:

Act Blue
Center for Policy Alternatives
Congressional Progressive Caucus
Democracy for America
Democratic National Committee
Emily's List
Progressive Democrats of America
Progressive States Network
Young Democrats of America

National Organizing Advocacy Groups:

AFL-CIO
Campaign for America's Future
Change to Win
Common Cause
MoveOn.org
National Organization for Women
National Urban League
People for the American Way
Planned Parenthood
Sierra Club

Grassroots Groups

ACORN
Center for Community Change
Rainbow/PUSH Coalition

Think Tanks and Research Centers:

Center for American Progress
Center for Economic and Policy Research
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Demos
Drum Major Institute
Economic Policy Institute
Institute for Policy Studies
New Politics Institute
Political Research Associates
United For a Fair Economy

MESSAGE SHAPERS

FrameShop
Green Media Toolshed
Rockridge Institute
SmartMeme
The FrameWorks Institute
The Metaphor Project
The Opportunity Agenda
The Praxis Project
The Spin Project

MEDIA LIAISONS

Featurewell.com
Fenton Communications
Institute for Public Accuracy
SheSource
The Mainstream Media Project
The Progressive Media Project

MEDIA WATCHDOGS

Center for Media and Democracy
Commercial Alert
Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)
Media Alliance
Media Matters for America
Project Censored
Women in Media & News (WIMN)
Youth Media Council

MEDIA REFORMERS

Alliance for Community Media
Center for Digital Democracy
Center for International Media Action
Center for Social Media
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Electronic Policy Information Center
Free Press
HearUsNow.org
Media Access Project
Public Knowledge
Reclaim the Media

PROGRESSIVE MEDIA INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

BlogPAC
Independent Press Association
Media Venture Collective
NAMAC
New America Media
The Media Channel
The Media Consortium
Personal Democracy Forum
Progressive Communicators Network

POLITICAL INDEPENDENT MEDIA

Print

The American Prospect
Bitch
ColorLines
In These Times
Mother Jones
Ms. Magazine
The Nation
The Progressive
Sojourners
The Washington Monthly
Z Magazine

Radio

Air America
Counter Spin
Democracy Now!
Free Speech Radio News
National Radio Project
Pacifica Radio
Prometheus Radio Project
Public News Service
The Public Radio Exchange

(Cont.)

Television and Film Projects

Balcony Films
Brave New Films
Current TV
Deep Dish TV
Free Speech TV
Globalvision
Guerrilla News Network
Link TV
Paper Tiger Television
Third World Majority
WITNESS

Book Publishers

Beacon Press
Chelsea Green Publishing
Haymarket Books
Monthly Review Press
Nation Books
Seal Press
Seven Stories Press
South End Press
The New Press
Working Assests Publishing

Online Magazines and Portals

Afro-Netizen
AlterNet
Black Commentator
Buzzflash
Common Dreams
ConsortiumNews
CounterPunch
Grist
OneWorld
The Raw Story
Salon
TomPaine
Women's eNews

Blogs

AMERICABlog
Crooks & Liars
Daily Kos
Daou Report
Hullabaloo
Informed Comment
FireDogLake
Eschaton
Feministing
Huffington Post
Liberal Oasis
MyDD
Talking Points Memo

For expanded list, visit:

www.inthesetimes.com/mediamap

By Jessica Clark and Tracy Van Slyke, Research assistance by Annie Anderson, Alejandra Cerna Rios, Brandon Forbes

in days and weeks, and even when a story has enough netroots momentum to float around for months, it will have little effect on the wider public discourse without the other sides of the triangle in place.”

While progressive bloggers focus on the daily news grind, other progressive media play a different, but equally impor-

and academics to the mainstream media, no organizations are doing the same for the independent journalists and analysts. Progressives must develop and fund the next level of infrastructure to accomplish this. One idea worth discussing is the creation of a national progressive book-ing agency.

And all that gives progressive media the chance to find larger audiences than ever before. “The playing field has been leveled between so-called mainstream and so-called alternative media,” says Sifry. “I recently heard Amy Goodman brag that her ‘Democracy Now!’ pod-cast has as many subscribers on iTunes

This static triangle of the beltway, the bloggers and the big boys of cable TV will not shift the debate. It will take a vibrant network of progressive media outlets.

tant, role. Progressive outlets reported on the lies of the Bush administration and the atrocities in Darfur months before these became mainstream news stories. And they chronicled the hidden desperation of poor Americans—long before Katrina, which made Anderson Cooper famous for noticing the “news” that was all around him.

This static triangle of the beltway, the bloggers and the big boys of cable TV will not shift the debate. It will take a vibrant network of progressive media outlets, reporters, artists, grassroots organizers, politicians, researchers, celebrities, activists, think tanks and citizens working in concert.

Connections still to be made

With two and a half years left in the Bush presidency and the mid-term elections looming, progressives have begun developing a network that can elevate progressive ideals and experts into the mainstream, as well as media initiatives that reach critical new audiences. But is that enough? AlterNet Executive Editor Don Hazen noted in a recent article, “The emerging media elements, as feisty and effective as they are, don’t yet add up to an overall media vision and infrastructure. Much of the new progressive media capacity is reactive, lacking the ability to effectively frame a vision for the future.”

In order to shape the news instead of responding to it, progressive organizations and media outlets still need pipelines for moving stories, reporters and experts into each other’s outlets, as well as into agenda-setting media like “Meet the Press.”

While groups like the Institute for Public Accuracy promote progressive experts

It is also time to harness progressive content through a national syndication service that will connect to other media outlets, including campus newspapers, the ethnic media and local opinion pages. Projects such as FeatureWell.com and the Progressive Media Project do place progressive content into mainstream outlets, but this has not been supported on a large scale.

The reporters, pundits and bloggers on the front lines of political debate need to forge stronger ties to the think tanks and organizations that provide the facts and research needed to make a case for progressive change. The Center for American Progress has made great strides in this area, as has the New York-based Drum Major Institute (DMI), which has revamped its operations to focus on communicating its findings to the a wider audience. “We have a saying here,” says Elana Levin, DMI’s director of communications. “If a report wasn’t read, it wasn’t written.” As part of its strategy, DMI requires its fellows to blog, a perfect example of bridging old and new communication models.

All of these strategies must work in tandem, connecting existing institutions with the evolving 21st century audience, thereby reaching people who previously only had access to mainstream news.

“What’s changed in the last five years is that the people who used to be called the audience are now co-participants in creating the news,” says Micah Sifry, executive editor of the Personal Democracy Forum, a Web site that explores the intersection of technology and politics. “Progressive media as a whole has become profoundly more small-d democratic, open and participatory.”

as Tim Russert’s ‘Meet the Press.’ Surely that tells us that the old notion of creating an ‘alternative’ media in opposition to the ‘mainstream’ has become meaningless. At a time when anyone can find any article or report from almost any news outlet in the world directly and instantaneously, it makes little sense to marginalize ourselves as ‘alternative.’”

It’s important to stay abreast of new media opportunities, but adopting and shifting into these new forms won’t be enough. In order to break through the din, members of the progressive media network will have to produce reporting and political entertainment that is surprising, immediate, factual and nuanced, using all of the tools at its disposal: collaboration, activism, aesthetics, humor, and a deep understanding of the power that progressive values and history have to inspire.

Bill Moyers recently told a meeting of public broadcasters, “One reason we get such pale and unquestioning journalism in America is that skepticism and irreverence toward the prerogatives of power and privilege are exactly what corporate media moguls don’t want from the journalists who work for them.”

Skepticism and irreverence, along with a commitment to the values of free speech, social justice, environmental conservation and equal opportunities for all, are what the 21st century audience is hungry for. It’s time for progressive media makers to seize the moment. ■


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The New Funding Heresies

What everyone knows (but no one will say) about funding the left

BY CHRISTOPHER HAYES



Their names, for the most part, are unknown. But we know a bit about what they've been up to. In early May about 100 well-heeled progressive donors from around the country assembled in a luxury resort on the outskirts of Austin, Texas, for a 21st

century version of the smoke-filled room (i.e., the smoke-free room). The occasion was the second meeting of the Democracy Alliance, a group of millionaires—including George Soros and insurance magnate Peter Lewis—who've pledged to give a minimum of \$200,000 a year for the next five years to progressive organizations. Also in attendance were representatives from 25 organizations seeking Alliance funding.

The three-day meeting was partly a conference on the future of the progressive movement—featuring panels on America's Role in the World, 21st Century Economics and a surprise talk by Bill Clinton, who caused a stir with his testy response to a question about his wife's continued support of the Iraq occupation—and partly a meeting to decide who would be the beneficiaries of the Alliance's largesse. On the last afternoon, all of the partners met behind closed doors to make their final decisions.

Oh, to be a fly on *that* wall.

Since word of the Alliance first spread through progressive circles last year, it has loomed large in the imagination of many in the movement. Its tight-lipped approach to publicity has given rise to rumors, speculation and grumbling about a lack of transparency. But the Alliance's approach to long-term funding also suggests the promise of a significant change in the way the left is funded, one that many say is long overdue.

In the wake of the 2004 presidential election, more and more progressive funders are coalescing around what might be called the Infrastructure First theory of progressive revival. Originally

pioneered by former Clinton Treasury official and Democracy Alliance founder Rob Stein, and now advocated by everyone from DNC chair Howard Dean to SEIU President Andy Stern, the theory goes something like this: The single most important factor in the right's political dominance over the last several decades is its superior infrastructure—a network of well-funded, tightly coordinated advocacy organizations, grassroots groups, think tanks and media platforms that are capable of mobilizing the base, drawing in new converts, moving the national political debate and exerting astounding influence on elected politicians. In a somewhat legendary PowerPoint presentation, Stein documents the way this conservative infrastructure was built, who funded it and how it works. The Democracy Alliance's mission is to help build a countervailing force on the left, what is cheekily referred to as the Vast Left Wing Conspiracy.

Indeed, there's been a shroud of mystery surrounding the group from its very beginning. "Now that we are fully operational, we recognize our responsibility for greater transparency and accessibility to the center-left community, including the press," Stein, who was at the meeting, told me recently. "But last year when the Alliance was literally in formation, we consciously chose not to ballyhoo or promote ourselves."

Secrecy isn't limited to the Alliance. In progressive circles, it seems the first rule of fundraising is: Don't talk about fundraising. Call up someone at a major foundation or a development director and their first response is to go off the record. "There's a deafening silence within the movement around the role of money in movement building," says Daniel Faber, who teaches sociology at Boston's Northeastern University and edited *Foundations for Social Change: Critical Perspectives on Philanthropy and Popular Movements*. "It's very difficult to penetrate that veil of secrecy."

It makes sense. Progressive activists, organizers and leaders are rarely in a position to openly criticize their funders. (That includes *In These Times*—here's hoping that the foundation that pays my salary admires our bracing honesty.) And funders find themselves so besieged by requests for money (not to mention right-wing invective, as Soros can tell you), there's a tendency to fly beneath the radar. But if the progressive movement is going to build an infrastructure to rival the right, it has to examine and undo the numerous dysfunctions that stem from the way it is currently funded. In order to do that, it must initiate a public

debate, no matter how awkward such a discussion might be. It might seem churlish to criticize foundations and donors that are giving away hundreds of millions of dollars, but it's the people writing the checks that tend to make the rules and nearly everyone now agrees those rules need to change.

In more than three dozen interviews, I tried to suss out what the major criticisms of the existing funding mechanisms were and what new models were being set up to address the problems that funders, organizers, academics and observers had identified. I found, much to my surprise, a shocking degree of consensus about what's broken and how to fix it.

So here, then, are the five heresies held by the new funding consensus.

Big foundations aren't the answer

When you ask Daniel Faber who funds the left, he bluntly says that the dirty little secret is that most of the money comes from large foundations. Faber estimates that "foundation dollars provide 70 to 90 percent of funding support for most social movements."

The majority of this money comes from just a few large foundations. In a recent study of social justice philanthropy, the Foundation Center noted that two foundations, Ford and Robert Wood Johnson, provide 25 percent of foundation grants for social justice work. "That's a tremendous concentration of influence," Faber says. "And the problem with the mainline foundations is that they don't attack social problems in political terms. They look at them in terms of providing services—they look at them in isolation."

A program director at one major foundation that funds a wide variety of progressive groups agreed with Faber. "I can't think of any topic we work on domestically where we feel like we want to build a movement," she said.

This attitude comes from the reformist culture of philanthropy, which grew out of a distinctly apolitical belief in *noblesse oblige* and neutered "charity." But it also results from a concerted effort by conservatives to bully and intimidate foundations away from funding groups that seek to build political power. Foundations like Ford, which funds hundreds of very progressive groups, live in fear of being hauled before Congress, nailed by the IRS or mau-maued by right-wing critics

for any perceived political project. (A recent cover story in *The Nation* recounted the latest dust-up over Ford's funding of a U.N. conference on racism that exploded into a controversy over anti-Semitism and -Zionism.)

Things are quite different on the right. Partly because conservatives felt shut out of major foundation funding, a network of conservative family foundations grew up in the '60s to fund the nascent movement. And unlike their mainstream counterparts, the Olin, Scaife, Coors and Heritage foundations all proudly view themselves as funders of the conservative movement.

But for the progressive movement, the single largest source of funding comes from institutions that don't consider themselves part of the movement itself. This means that organizations are caught between pursuing their political objectives and pleasing their apolitical funders. Kim Klein, a development consultant who has spent three decades helping progressive organizations raise money, says that an over-reliance on foundation money is the "number one dysfunction" of the movement. "It reflects a lack of political analysis about the nature of money," she says. "If you're really serious about social change and social justice, then you want the people engaged in membership to feel ownership. Imagine there are two lines on your phone. One is someone from the so-and-so foundation and the other is a person who lives down the street. I'll tell you which call most executive directors take."

Fund institutions and organizations, not programs

It's tempting to view money as money: Why should it matter who a check comes from as long as it clears? But most money comes with strings attached and foundation money tends to have the most strings. Often those strings come in the form of grants for specific programs as opposed to general operating support. By granting money for specific programs, foundations can exert a tremendous amount of control over the organizations they fund. Faber says that the Ford Foundation once had a reputation for being so overbearing that grantees used to ask each other: "Have you been driven by Ford lately?"

Again, this differs from

the conservative movement. A 2004 report by the National Committee For Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) found that between 1999 and 2001 the top 79 conservative foundations gave \$94.3 million in general operating support to policy and advocacy organizations against \$77.5 million in program funds. In 2005, NCRP released another report which showed that the 10 best-funded conservative advocacy organizations receive 90 percent of their foundation funding in the form of general operating support. By contrast, their counterparts on the left receive just 16 percent of their foundation funding in the form of general operating support.

"There's a place for project funding," Stein says, "but if we're going to build a movement, there has got to be sustainable financial security for our organizations." This is why Democracy Alliance has committed to primarily providing general operating support. "It is almost impossible to be an aggressive, bold, problem-solving oriented institution without financial security," Stein says. "By way of example, the Heritage Foundation has a budget of \$40 million dollars but they have cash and investments of \$100 million. That's two and half years' worth of money to be creative."

Think and fund for the long term

Stein says his chief goal is to cultivate a culture of "strategic long-term investment." Emphasis on programs, he and others say, leads to a flavor-of-the-month effect, where funders support fashionable programs for a few years and then move on to the next new thing. Alison Fine, who has served as CEO of the E-Volve Foundation and consulted with grant-seekers, says, "It's



very hard to get people to put money into long-term infrastructure because it's

not sexy. Funders want to fund things they can count, something they can bring back to their trustees or their country club and say 'Look at what I funded,' and what we desperately need is someone who is going to fund the process of progressive change."

Long-term funding helps organizations focus on those kinds of activities—grass-roots organizing and base-building—that by nature require long gestation and don't readily produce the kind of immediate returns on investment that so many funders look for. Barbara Osborn, communications director at the small progressive Liberty Hill foundation, says that the recent immigration marches, which surprised many observers by turning out millions, are perfect examples of the fruits of this kind of long-term commitment. "Liberty Hill has invested \$4.5 million in immigrant rights work in Los Angeles since 2000," she said by email. "What erupted on the streets March 25 was no accident and no surprise to us."

Calls for long-term funding and more general operating support are by no means new. Indeed, nonprofit sector expert Pablo Eisenberg and members of the NCRP have been sounding this refrain for years. But the failures of 2004 have succeeded in knocking loose the status quo, even in the uber-conservative and

risk-averse world of philanthropy. While Stein cautions that changing the approach is like moving an "oceanliner," the fact that Democracy Alliance and other groups now exist and can pursue grant-making that incorporates these critiques signifies the beginning of a sea-change. Stein says he's even found that program officers at foundations now quietly ask him to tell their bosses that they need to increase the lengths of their grant cycles.

4 Fund innovation, provide startup money.

New organizations, particularly those with a novel approach or issue, face a Catch-22: They can only secure funding if they have a good reputation and a demonstrated record of achieving results, but without any money it's hard to gain much of a reputation or get much of anything done. This might be called the problem of funding inertia: organizations that are funded tend to stay funded and those broke tend to stay broke. "There's really only a handful of people that are going to fund new ideas," a staff member at a small progressive startup told me. "You can be a community arts organization that's been around for 15 years, and you can get \$50,000 from a foundation. For something like our open media software, we're scrambling to get \$50,000."

The leading voices for a more innovation-oriented, risk-seeking style of progressive investment are Andy and Deborah Rappaport. Andy Rappaport made his fortune investing in communications and technology companies and has been giving to progressive organizations for years. In 2004, the Rappaports started a donor circle called Band of Progressives, modeled after the Band of Angels, a group of fellow Silicon Valley investors

who would meet regularly to evaluate start-ups. The couple gained a reputation for giving generously to a variety of non-traditional organizations like Music for America, which sought to mobilize young voters through organizing concerts.

The venture capital model drew lots of converts and last year, the Rappaports set up a new organization called the New Progressive Coalition. NPC functions as a virtual marketplace of progressive giving, connecting organizations seeking money with those with money to give. Its Web site features MySpace-like profiles of different member groups (including *In These Times*) that investors can browse. The approach and vocabulary is frankly entrepreneurial: There are no donors, only "investors," staff members talk about measuring the "political return on investment" and setting up "portfolios" of organizations that investors can manage like a mutual fund.

The idea is that by opening up the funding process to a free-market approach NPC can avoid the conservatism that tends to prevail. "The political capital market is broken," says NPC's Investor Services Director Catalina Ruiz-Healy. "We're trying to fix it. The way politics has traditionally worked, there hasn't been much transparency, analysis or accountability. It's more someone told you to give to this or your friend is doing that." Those are valid data points, she says, but you would never use them to decide how to make financial investments.

"We're trying to build a mutual fund approach," she says. An investor can come to NPC with some parameters, and they can suggest a bundled set of organizations to invest in. "We can say: 'Here's a way for you to invest, we've done the due diligence. You need the big elephant and these three startups. One startup might fail, but your money isn't down the tubes.' We need to take risks. We create an environment where there is calculated risk-taking."

5 Expand the small donor base

Due in no small part to Rob Stein's infamous PowerPoint, the dominant narrative of the Vast Right Wing Conspiracy tells of a nefarious cabal of rich masterminds getting together and single-handedly funding modern conservatism. But "nobody understands that much of the right's work was self-funded," says Jean Hardisty, who founded Po-

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litical Research Associates to study the conservative movement. "The religious right raised its money for the most part from its own people."

"The Heritage Foundation has 275,000 individual donors," says Kim Klein. "The Right-To-Life organizations have thousands of small donors. The grassroots of the right wing is actually funded by the grassroots and the grassroots of the left wing is funded by foundations, and I think it's an enormous problem."

Self-funded movements were once the norm on the left as well. The labor movement is funded almost entirely through union dues, and the early Civil Rights movement, though it received key support from small, progressive family foundations, was bankrolled overwhelmingly by African-American business people and congregants in black churches.

But in the '60s and '70s, progressive organizations outside civil rights and labor came to rely heavily on foundation support. At the same time, conservative mastermind Richard Viguerie pioneered direct mail, a method of mail solicitation that proved enormously successful and helped capture an entire generation of Republican and conservative small donors.

The great hope for progressive organizations is that the Internet can be for the left what direct mail has been for the right. Traditionally small donor cultivation has been relatively expensive, meaning that the largest organizations are best equipped to pursue it. The Internet changes that calculus significantly, providing a means of reaching thousands of potential donors and processing donations with an incredibly low overhead.

But it's unclear whether Internet giving will simply make small donor fundraising less expensive and more efficient, or whether it has the ability to expand the universe of people who are willing to give money.

Even if Internet small-donor cultivation doesn't solve an organization's funding problems, it has a substantive effect that ranges beyond the immediate financial return. "People need to own and run their organizations, elect officers, set the budget for the staff," says Steven Kest, executive director of ACORN, which requires dues from all of its members. "Paying for the organization is one way of owning the organization."

IT'S ALMOST TOO obvious a point to articulate, but it bears repetition nonetheless: The arithmetic of fundraising is not the simple arithmetic of democracy. There is no one person, one vote. American hyper-capitalism creates winners and losers, people who can write \$20 checks and people who can write \$2 million checks. Even if the Internet provides a platform for massive small donor giving, large donors are still going to play a disproportionately large role in funding the progressive movement. But the specter of a progressive movement funded largely by wealthy individuals, or even members of the comfortable upper middle class, raises some thorny issues, ones that hover over the technical and strategic critiques outlined above.

It's not often stressed, but the conservative movement was motivated as much by class self-interest as it was by ideology. While key funders like Scaife and Coors were furthering their beliefs they were lining their own pockets by agitating for reduced taxes on wealth, union-busting and deregulation. "There's something much more authentic on the right about what they were doing," says Jeff Krehely, research director at NCRP. "Spending \$5 million on grants would bring so many more rewards in the long run because the policies would change to benefit them."

This isn't the case for progressives, who will have to rely upon a kind of *What's the Matter with Kansas?* effect in which ideological principles trump personal class interests. "Trying to fund an economically progressive movement from a bunch of rich people is a tough sell," says Krehely. "I don't think anyone's tried to figure out what we do about that. Until we figure that out I don't think we're going to get very far."

Jane Covey, development director for United for a Fair Economy, disagrees. She cites UFE's work with wealthy individuals in fighting against the repeal of the estate tax. "They ended up being a very surprising voice on the side of economic justice and fairness."

"All of us want our stock prices to do well," says Larry Litvak, a former Working Assets executive and current investor with NPC, "but at the same time you're not satisfied if just that aspect of your goals are being addressed." The silver lining of the increase of inequality over the last 30 years, Litvak says, is that now a lot of people "both have as-

sets and have this broader set of values."

But what exactly is in that "broader set of values" is what's at issue. Last year I spoke to one Democracy Alliance partner who expressed frustration with his fellow partners' reluctance to fund groups that would attack the free-trade consensus. "I think this is a really dangerous period to be mindless free-traders. I don't think the Democracy Alliance is wrestling with that stuff," he said. "That's one of those things that's really hard for wealthy people to do, to feel how working people feel."

There might not be a simple way of resolving this inherent tension, but in all the ink spilled over Soros in the last election cycle, it was easy to miss that Big Money is only part of the picture. In fact, the big donors themselves are the most eager to point that out. "We do not believe that we are the end-all, be-all source of financial security and health," says Stein. "We will not build a healthy center-left movement in America without a diverse base of small- and medium-sized donors."

If there's one answer to the question of how best to fund the left, then, it's this: Raise as much money from as many sources as possible. For the last 36 years, ACORN has managed to win crucial victories in states and localities around the country. It's survived and even thrived during a time of conservative ascendancy, growing its staff and operations and spearheading minimum wage campaigns and organizing drives.

Kest chalks up the organization's longevity to the diversity of its funding sources and its reliance on members. "There are valuable partnerships to be made with wealthy donors and foundations—there's no way in which we are purists about this." Indeed, ACORN receives money from the Rappaports and foundations. "But," says Kest, "if we were solely dependent on contributions from wealthy individuals and foundations, I don't think we would have survived for 36 years." ■



and push U.S. automakers away from their gas-guzzler strategy, which is now blowing up in their faces.

Axing the Inefficient

Especially with prices already high, politicians won't raise gasoline taxes to finance new research and improved mass transit as Lester Brown, founder and president of the environmentalist Earth Policy Institute, has proposed. Besides, as Amory Lovins at the non-profit Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), an energy research and advocacy enterprise, argues, higher gasoline prices are not the best way to move consumers to buy more fuel-efficient cars.

Lovins says that consumers are more likely to buy efficient cars if the price of the car they buy reflects its efficiency. He proposes "feebates," which would impose a tax—or fee—on inefficient vehicles that would finance rebates for fuel-efficient vehicles. Low-income car owners would also be paid to junk old gas-guzzlers and buy newer, more efficient cars. Rather than blindly rely on the market he extols, Lovins' strategy looks at where the market is failing to work and uses public policy to overcome barriers and bottlenecks.

Democrats face a political dilemma in dealing with gas prices. If they promise much lower gas prices, they will be both politically dishonest and promote bad policy. But they can realistically promise that Americans can travel where they want for less money and less environmental damage—if the country pursues more efficient energy technologies and alternative energy supplies.

Other countries—including China—already set higher standards for vehicle fuel efficiency. Europe and Japan expect automakers to produce cars that average between 39 to 44 miles per gallon within the next few years. Although the Department of Transportation recently decided that light trucks and SUVs must operate with an average of 24 miles per gallon by 2011, the standard for cars remains stuck at 27.5 miles per gallon. RMI concludes that carmakers could use ultralight materials and new technologies to make a full-size, attractively-priced SUV that gets nearly 80 miles to the gallon. Since 1975, the United States doubled the work each barrel of oil can do, according to RMI, and it can double the work from each barrel in the next 20 years with investments in efficiency that are already very cost-competitive.

Running on Empty

The United States' real problem with oil and energy policy goes beyond rising prices

BY DAVID MOBERG

WITH GAS PRICES PUSHING \$3 a gallon, drivers aren't just digging deep into their pockets. They're getting angry—not just with oil companies and President Bush—and they think Democrats can do better. Yet converting those sentiments into electoral victories, let alone effective legislation, may not be so easy.

According to several polls taken in late spring, Americans rank gasoline prices slightly ahead of the Iraq war as a major issue, believe Bush has no clear plan for lower prices, and regard Republicans as far more influenced by big oil companies than Democrats. They think government can—and should—do something about the price at the pump.

People are right to be angry at oil companies, particularly when an ExxonMobil CEO retires with a \$400 million compensation package. According to Public Citizen, a growing concentration of ownership, especially of U.S. refineries, has increased the spread between oil costs and gasoline prices. But such anti-com-

petitive practices play only a small role in the recent increases.

Politicians can score some points by making price-gouging a federal crime, as Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) has proposed. More importantly, they could eliminate the billions of dollars in tax subsidies Bush's 2005 energy bill granted to oil companies. And, as Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) proposed in her high-profile energy policy speech in May, Congress could require oil companies either to pay some of their soaring profits into a strategic energy fund or invest the same amount in renewable, alternative energy sources.

Short-term sops, like \$100 rebates or gas tax relief for consumers, solve little (though raising the minimum wage would help the hard-hit poor). But they do highlight a political dilemma for Democrats: Gasoline in the United States is already priced too low to reflect the full social cost of America's oil addiction. Steadily rising taxes on gasoline over the past two decades could have been used to fund efficient transportation alternatives

Alternatives beyond efficiency

Even an oil man like Bush gives lip service to efficiency, while proposing to weaken auto efficiency regulations and cutting funding for efficiency research. But Democrats haven't launched a crusade for "doing more with less," in Sen. Clinton's words. The Democratic alternative to Bush's energy plan, introduced in May by Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, proposed no new efficiency standards for vehicles.

Instead, Democrats are ardently promoting alternative fuels, especially biodiesels and ethanol (or ethanol-based E-85 fuels) from corn or a broad range of cellulosic crops and wastes. And many politicians are proposing ways to increase the number of gas stations that carry E-85 "flex fuel."

With technology progressing and oil prices rising, the economic case for such biofuels has grown stronger. But biofuels can't replace all of the oil the country now consumes, because that would require more farmland than exists in the United States. So biofuels can only become a serious alternative to oil if transportation becomes dramatically more efficient.

The United States needs to reduce, even eliminate, the need for all oil as a fuel, not just foreign oil. As long as the U.S. economy depends on oil, it will be subject to the prices set by a world market vulnerable to disruptions. Since the '70s, the United States has proclaimed a goal of energy independence. Implicitly this addresses the Middle East, even though the country gets only 10 percent of its oil from the region. But politicians pay less attention to becoming independent of big energy companies and vulnerable, centralized technologies, from oil pipelines to nuclear power plants.

The role of labor

Republicans oppose Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) standards, the longstanding federal vehicle efficiency standards, because they oppose regulations and want to serve the short-term interests of the oil and auto industries. But many Democrats are also reluctant to buck both manufacturers and the United Auto Workers. They worry that the Big Three auto companies in particular will lose market share and jobs, since they have relied on inefficient models for their profits. Such manufacturers may simply import more fuel-efficient cars in order

to meet a higher CAFE standard.

An alternative strategy, which has backing in principle from the United Auto Workers, would provide U.S. automakers with incentives for domestic production of new, more efficient vehicles. Despite the appeal of hydrogen fuel cells, electric vehicles or even diesels, the main transition engines will likely be hybrids that combine gasoline and electric engines (or plug-in hybrids that can also recharge batteries from the main power grid while parked). They're already available and can more easily use existing gas stations to deliver fuel.

In one leading proposal for transition financing, introduced by Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) and Rep. Jay Inslee (D-Wash.), auto companies that volunteered to invest in new hybrids and other fuel-efficient technologies would have a portion of their health care costs for retirees (roughly \$1,500 per car for General Motors) paid for. Arguably, health care costs should be a social responsibility for these companies anyway, and those costs might be shifted to the public if the companies go bankrupt.

It's an appealing deal, but it may not offer enough relief to ease the health care crunch or to help finance a rapid transition to new vehicles that would pay off in jobs and energy savings. Policymakers looking for a bigger change could still combine the swap with higher CAFE standards, feebates and other types of loans, loan guarantees or direct public investment.

This financing could speed production not only of hybrid engines but also new ultra-light, super-strong carbon fiber or light steel auto bodies that could save as much energy as the new engines. Without public investment and accountability, the transition will yield fewer benefits to society and more harm to autoworkers.

So Democrats could promise that they will help create a new domestic auto industry that can deliver better, safer, more efficient vehicles that cost less to operate, rely more on home-grown sources of energy, minimize harm to the environment and create good jobs. The Apollo Alliance—a coalition of unions, environmental groups, social justice advocates and businesses—has long advocated such an inspirational project. Now the Democrats simply need the courage to assert that government can and should take on the task for the common good. ■

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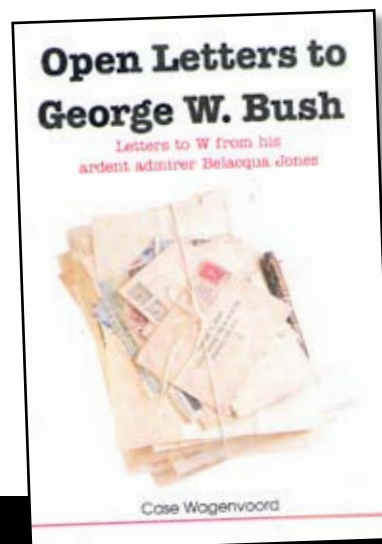
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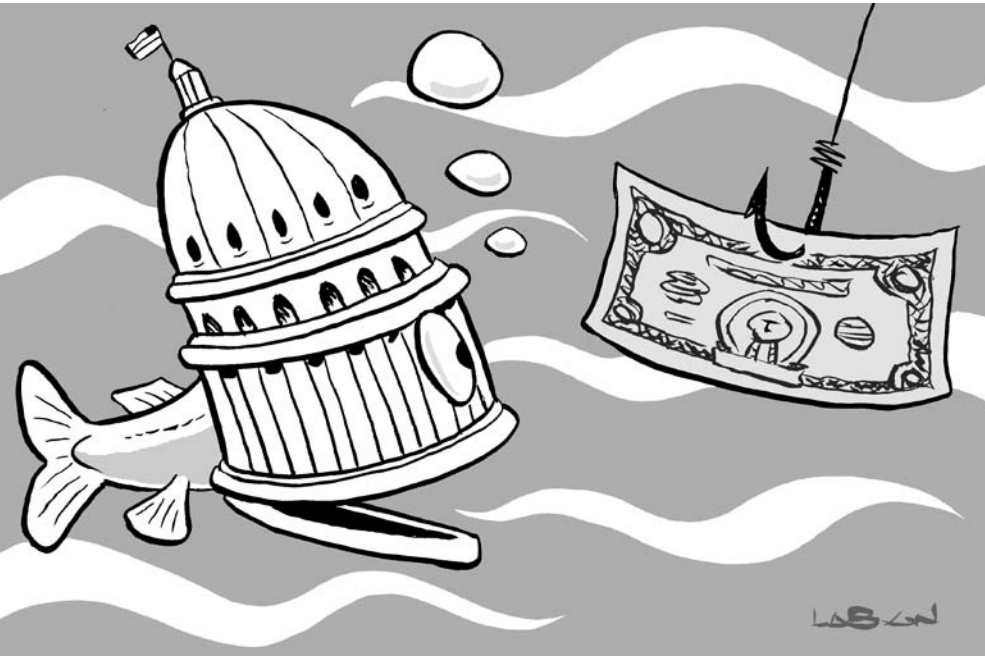
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Legislating Under the Influence

Up close and personal with the House Appropriations Committee

BY DAVID SIROTA



is also at the center of the pay-to-play scandal surrounding Jack Abramoff—the convicted Republican lobbyist who tried to buy off members of the Appropriations Committee on behalf of his clients. DeLay, who had previously served on the Appropriations Committee before stepping down to become Majority Leader, was a close associate of Abramoff's. He took lavish trips paid for by lobbyists with interests before the committee and pocketed campaign cash from Abramoff and his associates.

But DeLay is not alone. Rep. John Doolittle (R-Calif.), has received tens of thousands of dollars from Abramoff and his clients, while using Abramoff's D.C. restaurant as a venue for fundraising parties. Additionally, Doolittle is among three members of the committee who accepted a combined \$200,000 from the defense contractor, MZM, the corporation at the center of the Cunningham bribery conviction.

And consider committee chairman Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-Calif.). The *Washington Post* reported in May that he is now officially a target of a federal law enforcement investigation. He steered "hundreds of millions of dollars in federal projects for clients of one of his closest friends, lobbyist and former state Congressman Bill Lowery," according to the *San Diego Union Tribune*. In exchange, "Lowery, the partners at his firm and their clients have donated 37 percent of the \$1.3 million that Lewis' political action committee received in the past six years."

Lewis is not the only lawmaker whose behavior on the committee has caught the attention of federal investigators. Joining the chairman is Democratic appropriator Alan Mollohan (W.V.). The *Washington Post* reports that he "used his seat on the House Appropriations Committee to secure more than \$150 million for five non-profit groups"—groups associated with the West Virginia congressman's own business partners. During the very same time, Mollohan became a multi-millionaire.

This pay-to-play corruption on the appropriations committee extends to national security. Rep. Hal Rogers (R-Ky.), who

WHEN I WAS HIRED to work on the U.S. House Appropriations Committee in 2001, I was told by many in Washington that the panel was one of last remaining places in Congress where things actually get done. By the time I left Capitol Hill some two and a half years later, I had learned what all Americans are now realizing: The panel certainly does get things done, but not for the people who elected its members. It gets things done almost exclusively for those lobbyists and corporate interests that buy influence through campaign contributions. The committee has become, in short, the breeding ground of congressional corruption.

Over the last year, the public has learned exactly how lawmakers on the Appropriations Committee have abused the incredible power granted to them as overseers of how the federal government spends tens of billions of dollars.

And the power is incredible. As chief spokesman for Democrats on this committee, I had a firsthand view of how this panel has been abused by the Republicans. Tens of millions of dollars move from one district to another for purely political reasons—all with the quick stroke of a

pen behind closed doors. One line anonymously inserted in a thousand-page bill can mean the difference between the creation or elimination of national consumer regulations bought and paid for by industry campaign donors. The loudest protests from the most passionate members of both parties can be silenced on the floor of the House with a mere scowl from one of the Appropriations subcommittee chairmen. At a moment's notice these "cardinals," as they are known, will remove the protester's pet projects unless they stop criticizing whatever heinous provisions were attached to the spending bill being debated.

Such power was bound to be abused in the current Congress, where the concepts of restraint or law-abiding behavior are treated as punchlines. First, in March, came the conviction of senior appropriator Duke Cunningham. The California Republican steered millions of dollars of federal contracts to the same company that paid him more than \$2 million in bribes.

When Cunningham was forced to resign, Congress replaced him with Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas). Already under indictment for money laundering, DeLay

heads the homeland security appropriations subcommittee, has diverted funds for making tamper-proof identification cards to “companies that are donors to his political causes,” according to the *New York Times*. Rogers has taken 11 trips paid for by an organization to which the congressman helped steer a no-bid contract, and even moved funds to a company that employs his son. The result of Rogers’ shenanigans has been a more than two-year delay in the production of the ID cards.

These examples are disturbing. But as I also learned in my time working for the Appropriations Committee, the most corrupt behaviors are often perfectly legal. As the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics notes, “The committee does not just provide funding for lucrative government contracts, but is also famous for inserting last-minute industry-backed provisions blocking regulatory actions.”

Appropriators, knowing the spending bills they write must pass in order to keep the government operating, slip provisions into these bills that prevent the government from enforcing already-passed laws. This corrupt practice is so well-honed, industry-funded think tanks like the Heritage Foundation have issued detailed reports instructing lawmakers on where they can most effectively use riders to do corporate favors. These riders are perfectly legal and profoundly damaging.

Consider what happened in the wake of Mad Cow scares, when Congress passed a law mandating country-of-origin labeling of meat. When it came time to implement the law, Rep. Henry Bonilla (R-Texas) used his chairmanship of the agriculture appropriations subcommittee to insert language into a spending bill to postpone the law indefinitely. He was rewarded for his efforts by tens of thousands of dollars of campaign cash from the food processing industry. Especially grateful was Tyson Foods, which in 2004 gave Bonilla its private jet so that he could fly to fundraisers all over the country.

Stemming the corruption emanating from the Appropriations Committee is no small task. Some have suggested prohibiting appropriators from earmarking federal money for specific projects. But that would merely move spending decisions out of Congress and into the executive branch, and not solve the problem. Unelected bureaucrats, not elected officials, would get to decide how money is spent—a clear affront to Congress’s con-

stitutional power of the purse, and no guarantee that corporate interests would not simply shift their influence-buying operations to the White House.

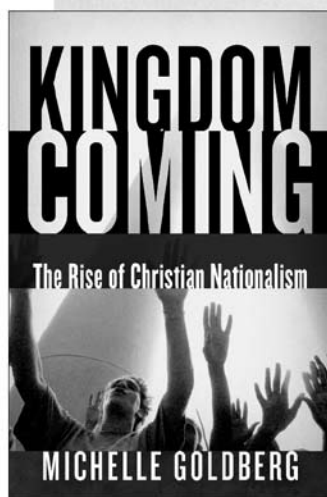
Sunlight laws are a better first step. The root of the problem lies not in appropriators’ power, but in the use of secrecy to exercise that power. Right now, appropriators can slip earmarks or destructive regulatory riders into giant spending bills anonymously, meaning no threat of public embarrassment for those trying to abuse their power. Worse, the bills carrying these provisions—often thousands of pages long—can be brought to vote just hours after they are written, ensuring there is no time for scrutiny.

I remember late nights gulping down coffee, frantically leafing through finalized spending bills trying to answer lawmakers’ questions about what they would be voting on. The appropriations process, I learned, is purposely rigged. To remedy the situation, Congress must pass a new law that forces appropriators to put their names next to the provisions they sponsor and forces the Appropriations Committee to provide ample time for their bills to be scrutinized before they are passed into law.

The next logical step is for Congress to embrace a public financing system of elections—a concept being aggressively pushed by Rep. David Obey (D-Wisc.), the House Democrats’ senior appropria-

tor. America currently relies on a system of legalized bribery to elect our Congress. Lawmakers’ campaigns are funded by the corporate contributors, who then demand favors such as wasteful federal contracts in return. A public financing system of elections, such as the ones adopted by Arizona or Connecticut, would allow candidates to run for office without having to participate in this corrupt cycle, and without feeling the need to use their positions to reward campaign donors.

The House Appropriations Committee may seem like just another congressional panel, but it is not. It is the place that distinguishes America’s system of government from most others, because it is where democracy—not a sole executive or dictator—exerts control over the nation’s treasury. But like a disease afflicting a vital organ, corruption is eating away at this committee. Already, that corruption has destroyed the bipartisanship that used to ensure that the panel’s important work was handled seriously. And now, as that corruption spreads from the committee into the Congress as a whole, our entire system of democracy is under threat from a money-dominated political process gone mad. Unless Congress reforms the way this committee works, America can never hope to take back our government from the corporate interests that own our political process. ■



“A chilling and lucid investigation into the rise of Christian extremism in America.”

—Julia Scheeres, author of *Jesus Land*

“America’s theocrats have to be seen, heard, and read to be believed. Michelle Goldberg is one of our indispensable scouts, and *Kingdom Coming* is a brave and important book.”

—Todd Gitlin, professor of journalism, Columbia University, and author of *The Intellectuals and the Flag*

“A superbly reported inside tour of the far-out Christian Right. This book should scare every American who cherishes our secular Constitution and its separation of church and state.” —Susan Jacoby, author of

Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism



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WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD

BY SCOTT WITMER

Writer Without Borders

Eduardo Galeano disdains borders, both in life and in literature. Exiled from his native Uruguay after the 1973 military coup, he returned to Montevideo in 1985, where he continues to live and write. Galeano's books subvert the distinctions between history, poetry, memoir,

political analysis and cultural anthropology. With a graceful sense of craft, he uses "only words that really deserve to be there" to convey a humanely moral perspective on matters both personal and political. His writing honors the experiences of everyday life as a contrast to the mass media that "manipulates consciousness, conceals reality and stifles the creative imagination ... in order to impose ways of life and patterns of consumption." By multiplying seldom heard voices, Galeano refutes the official lies that pass for history—his work represents an eloquent, literary incarnation of social justice.

His most recent book, *Voices of Time: A Life in Stories* (Metropolitan Books), combines 333 prose poems into a fluid mosaic of humor, despair, beauty and hope. During a recent visit to Chicago, Galeano talked with *In These Times* about his life and work.

Your book *Open Veins of Latin America* (1971) analyzes the brutal exploitation of Latin American resources by the U.S. and European powers. That book, now a classic, was published at the beginning of an especially turbulent period of Latin American history. What was your life like at that time?

I was working as a journalist, always in independent jobs, working for weeklies—the mad adventures of independent journalism. So I earned my living quite difficultly, writing other things or editing books on the sexual life of bees, or some-

thing like this. I was also working in the publishing department of the University of Montevideo. And at night I went home to work on the book. It took four years of researching and collecting the information I needed, and some 90 nights to write the book.

Did you ever sleep?

I suppose I did not. I remember now, I was drinking rivers of coffee. Later I developed an allergy to coffee, but fortunately I overcame it, and now I'm a very good coffee drinker. I love it.

You were then forced into exile in Argentina, where you edited *Crisis*.

In the beginning of 1973, I was in jail for a short period in Uruguay and I decided prison life was not healthy, so I went to Buenos Aires. The magazine was a beautiful experience. We invented it with a small group of friends, trying to open a new way of speaking about culture.

Did you continue to publish when the military regime initiated censorship?

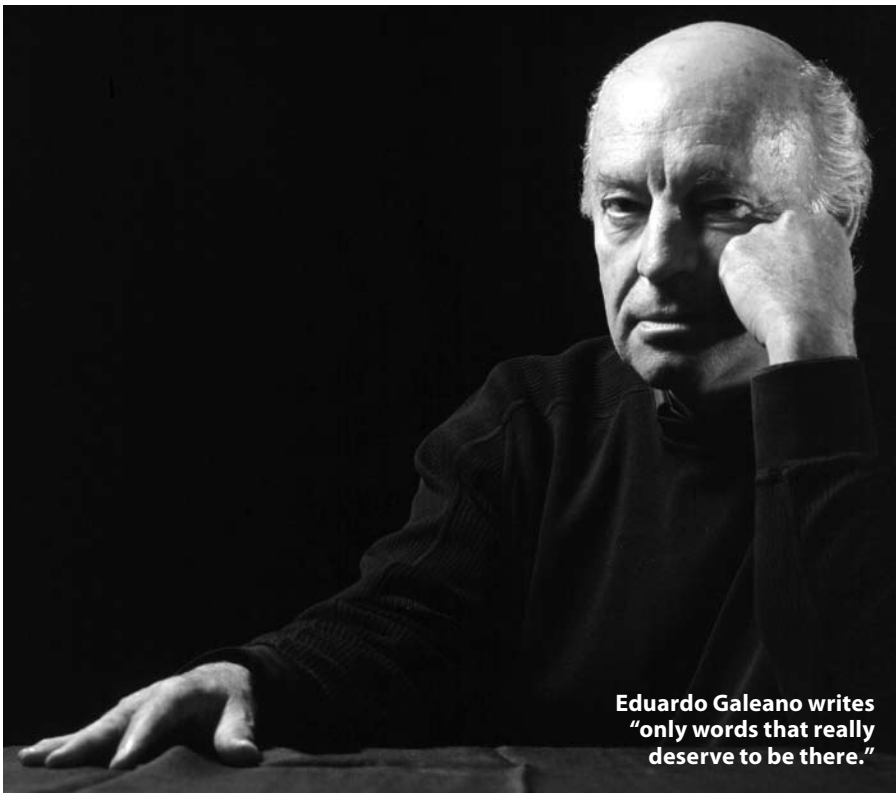
For two or three months, and after that it was impossible to go on. We were obliged to choose between silence and humiliation. We could stay alive if we accepted the obligation to lie, or we could shut up. We decided to shut up entirely and not pretend to be free, because that would give an alibi to the military regime to say, "See, there is freedom of expression here." Many members of our staff were killed or disappeared or

jailed or went into exile, and so it was a good decision to go away and abandon it. We left behind a very good memory of an exceptional cultural magazine. We showed that it was possible to have a different conception of culture. Not culture made by professional people to be consumed by non-professional people, like workers or anonymous people. Instead, we were trying to hear their voices. Not only to speak about reality, but asking reality, "What would you tell me?" This conversation with reality was the key to our success. That's why one of the first decrees of the military regime was to forbid the diffusion of "non-specialized opinions." We were trying to show that the best voices come from non-specialized mouths.

In the middle of 1976, I was obliged to fly away from Argentina because I was supposed to be on the death squad list to be killed. Many of my friends had been killed, and being dead is so boring, so I chose exile in Spain.

In Spain you began writing the *Memory of Fire* trilogy, an epic tapestry covering more than five centuries of American history and culture. What motivated you to undertake such a monumental project?

It scared me at the beginning. It was first conceived as a way to tell Latin American history. Then a close friend of mine, the Argentinian poet Juan Gelman, told me, "Why not go with all Americas, not just South America or Central America? We share a common origin and a lot of common stories interlinked, and we may perhaps have a common destiny. Not the official destiny built by the professional liars inside the sanctuaries of power, but a counter-history could help to find a counter-destiny." He tempted me with his words and so I covered all the Americas as a way of promoting the fact that "America" is all America, from Alaska to Chile.



Eduardo Galeano writes
"only words that really
deserve to be there."

Immigration, which remains a crucial issue in the United States, recurs as an important motif in your new book, *Voices of Time*. Could you talk about how immigration is perceived in Latin America as opposed to how it is perceived here?

It always depends on your point of view. Immigration may be perceived as a menace, as intrusion, or as a legitimate right. We are all immigrants. Except for a few black people in South Africa, we all come from some other part of the world. We all come from Africa, which is not good news for the ignorant racists. I'm sorry, but we have all been blacks once upon a time. So we are all immigrants. This is our way of life since forever. It's the same with butterflies, with animals, with birds. We humans are the only ones that create borders for immigration, saying, "You cannot go inside this line. This is the end of a country, and here begins another one." I'm afraid our time will be remembered as a sad period of human life in which money was free, but people were not.

Why are we seeing a resurgence of the left in Latin America?

This is the popular will, the will to

change reality. They have been cheated by all those years of so-called liberal experience, which is not liberal at all. It's just liberal for money. And it won't be easy to get out of it, because we have become prisoners of what I call "the culture of impotence." It's very difficult in Latin America to build a democracy after so many years of military terror and in a non-democratic world that will veto your attempt to change something. The experts will come. Not soldiers, now—experts. Sometimes experts are even more dangerous than soldiers. They say, "You cannot. The market is irritated. The market may be angry." It is as if the market is an unknown but very active and cruel god punishing us because we are trying to commit the cardinal sin of changing reality.

Just look at Evo Morales, the president of Bolivia. Bolivia was the richest country in all of the Americas at the beginning of the conquest period. They were the owners of the silver, which made possible the enrichment of Europe. Bolivia is now the poorest country in South America. Her richness was her main damnation. Morales is now trying to break with this shameful and humiliating tradition of always working for another's prosperity. When he national-

ized the gas and the oil, it was a scandal all over the world. "How could he? It's terrible!" Why is it terrible? Because recovering dignity is a cardinal sin. But he's also committing another cardinal sin: He's doing what he promised he would do. We in Latin America are suffering with special intensity the divorce between words and facts. When you say yes, you do no. When you say more or less, you do less or more. So facts and words are never encountering each other. When they pass each other by random accident, they don't say, "Hello, how are you?" because they have never met before. We are trained to lie. We are trained to accept lies as a way of life.

You have said, "Reality is not destiny; it's a challenge. ... We are not doomed to accept it as it is." How do we avoid becoming cynical when change seems impossible?

By keeping alive the memory of dignity. It's the only way. By telling and repeating that we are not born last year; we are born from a long tradition of betrayals, but also a long tradition of dignity. Here in Chicago, for instance, it is important to recover the memory of May First. The first time I came here, years ago, I was amazed that most people I encountered didn't know that this universal worker's fiesta—at once a tragedy and a fiesta, an homage paid to the Haymarket martyrs at the end of the 19th century—came from Chicago. And Chicago has deleted this memory, which is so important for the entire world. In present times, it's more important than ever, because each May First, crowds and crowds of people, different languages, different cultures, different continents, all celebrate the right to organize. Nowadays, the most important enterprises in the world, like Wal-Mart, forbid unions. They are deleting a tradition of two centuries of working-class fights. It's important for Chicago and for the entire world to recover memory. Not to visit it, like when you visit a museum, but to get from it fresh water for your thirst for justice, for beauty. It's a way of knowing that tomorrow is not just another name for today, because yesterday tells you that time is going on. ■

SCOTT WITMER lives in Chicago. He is currently working on a comic book about the life of socialist agitator Eugene Debs.



ROBYN BECK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Dykes on Bikes leads off the Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade in Long Beach, California.

BY BARBARA RAAB

Sticks & Stones ... and Dykes

If there is anybody who really understands the word “dyke,” it is Joan Nestle, an author, editor and activist in the LGBT community for nearly half a century. “In the late ‘50s,” she says, “when I was first exploring a public lesbian identity, the most

dehumanizing taunt suspicious heterosexuals hurled at me was ‘bull dyke.’ It was filled with their conception of what a lesbian was like—an ugly, aggressive animal.” In those days, says Nestle, the New York City police had a special holding cell for women picked up in their raids on lesbian bars: the bull dyke pen.

Nestle has recalled those pre-Stonewall days in her writing, and now has recounted them for an unusual legal battle with the federal government.

Nestle and 22 other prominent scholars, linguists, community leaders and writers have provided voluminous evidence in a long-running fight between

the United States Patent and Trademark Office and the San Francisco Women’s Motorcycle Club, more commonly known—and loved—as the Dykes on Bikes. The mostly-lesbian, heavily-leathered group has been leading the San Francisco Pride Parade down Market Street to the cheers of thousands since 1977.

In July 2003, the group applied for a federal trademark for the name “Dykes on Bikes” so that they could make sure it was used for non-profit, community-building activities and not for, say, some cheesy line of overpriced T-shirts and souvenirs.

In December 2005, nearly two and a half years after the application was submitted, the government finally said yes to the Dykes on Bikes, but only after the women's lawyers submitted a mountain of evidence to rebut the Trademark Office's repeated claims that the word "dyke," and the term "Dykes on Bikes," were offensive, disparaging, even vulgar to lesbians.

It was in the course of this fight with the government over the meaning of "dyke" that Dykes on Bikes lawyers hit upon the idea of collecting expert declarations from scholars, authors and activists, including Nestle.

In 1974, Nestle co-founded a unique cultural institution, the Lesbian Herstory Archives, the largest and oldest fount of information and primary source material about lesbian culture. Thus, as Nestle put it in her declaration in the Dykes on Bikes case, "I knew better than anyone what it meant when in the late '70s, younger women proudly reclaimed the word 'dyke.' ... Young women full of strength and hope ... emptied the word of its bigotry and fear, replacing it with community and self-affirmation."

The 23 declarations submitted to the Trademark Office played a key role in the reversal of the Dykes on Bikes' legal fortune. They also provide an eloquent and fascinating paper trail about lesbians' reclamation of a word that has been used as a weapon against them. As Vic Germany, president of the Dykes on Bikes club, put it, "I felt so strong after reading those declarations. I wish every dyke could read them."

Another one of the declarants is lesbian cartoonist Alison Bechdel, who for nearly a quarter of a century has drawn and written a nationally syndicated comic strip called "Dykes To Watch Out For," about a network of lesbian friends. Bechdel says she first heard the word "dyke" being used by other lesbians in 1980 at the annual Michigan Womyn's Music Festival.

"I noticed that many women were wearing small buttons with the word 'dyke' printed on them," she says. "This struck me as courageous, clever and humorous all at once, and I soon bought one for myself."

In 1983, Bechdel says, when she decided to use the word "dyke" in the title of her work, she was not only reflecting the language that she and her friends used to refer to one another, but also engaging in what she calls a kind of "linguistic activism." By putting the word "dyke" in the title of her comic strip, Bechdel could guarantee its frequent appearance in print, and thus, she explains, help redefine the word in a positive way.

Karla Jay, academic, activist and author of *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*, recalls the early '70s, when telephone directories wouldn't list the words "gay," "lesbian," or "homosexual." At the time, she suggested to a group of lesbian mothers that they call themselves Dykes with Tykes. "The suggestion was met with cheers," she says.

In her declaration, author Judy Grahn tells the Trademark Office that she proudly reclaimed "dyke" in some of her earliest work, including her 1966 satire of the psychoanalytic establishment, "The Psychoanalysis of Edward the Dyke."

Psychologist Shara Sand's declaration talks about her lesbian clients, who "often speak about the 'dyke drama' in their lives, refer to themselves as 'strong dykes,' working for the 'dyke cause,' and loving being a 'diesel dyke.'"

Seven of the 23 declarants are men, including Gary Buseck, the Legal Director of Boston-based Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, the public interest law firm that won the historic Massachusetts gay marriage victory.

"Without a doubt," Buseck says, "the word 'dyke' ... is definitely not derogatory." Buseck goes on to scold the Trademark Office that "LGBT people face a number of serious problems, including unequal treatment in the workplace, hate violence, ineligibility to serve their

Individually and collectively, the 23 declarations provide an eloquent and passionate paper trail about lesbians' reclamation of a word that had previously been used as a weapon against them.

country in the military and lack of access to the rights, responsibilities and financial benefits of civil marriage. In contrast, the proud use of the word 'dyke' by an organization highly regarded within the LGBT community is not an instance of discrimination."

Finally, the declarations include one of the heaviest hitters of the word world, Jesse Sheidlower, editor-at-large of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, author of a scholarly book about the history of the word "fuck," and editor of the entries for "dyke" and "bulldyke" in the *Historical Dictionary of American Slang*.

In his declaration, Sheidlower (who is white) draws a distinction between the use of the word "dyke" among lesbians, and the use of "nigger" among some African Americans—a term "still fraught" for the majority of African Americans. This raises a larger question of who gets to decide when a negative term of self-reference has reached a tipping point.

As *In These Times* went to press, the Dykes on Bikes are still waiting for their trademark, despite having prevailed on the law. The government's decision to grant it has been challenged—as any trademark can be for a period of time—by a California man describing himself as "a Male Citizen of the United States." In the papers he filed with the Trademark Office, he calls the word "dyke" a "symbol of hate" toward all men. The Dykes on Bikes' lawyers accuse him of "a public and political assault on the dyke community," and have asked the Trademark Office to dismiss his challenge. ■

BARBARA RAAB is a writer and non-practicing lawyer, with a particular interest in the intersection between the law and popular culture. She lives in New York City.



View through a broken office window of the World Trade Center wreckage.

BOOKS

Architectural Casualties of War

By Joshua Arthurs

ON NOV. 9, 1993, Croat artillery relentlessly bombarded the Bosnian town of Mostar. Their principal target was the Stari Most, a graceful, arching Ottoman bridge that held no strategic or military value. Linking the town's Muslim east and Croat west, the bridge had long symbolized Mostar's proud history of tolerance and cosmopolitanism—its deliberate destruction was intended to erase this legacy and physically rend its communities.

The bridge's demise is one recent example of the fate of architecture in wartime. From the firebombing of Dresden in World War II to the present-day looting of Iraq's archaeological heritage, the built environment has suffered tremendously in the conflicts of the past century. But under what circumstances is it appropriate to focus upon the architectural, rather than human, cost of war?

In *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (Reaktion Books), architecture and design critic Robert Bevan argues that attacks on architecture and crimes against humanity have consistently gone hand-in-hand. The Nazi destruction of synagogues on *Kristallnacht* was a "proto-genocidal episode," its symbolic smashing of property foreshadowing the subsequent barbarism of the concentration camps. The ethnic cleansing campaigns in the former Yugoslavia

entailed the removal not only of human beings, but of all physical reminders of their presence on the land—homes, mosques and monuments. Buildings occupy a special place in our consciousness: They convey a feeling of permanence and belonging, and serve as "a prompt, a corporeal reminder" of individual and collective memories. Consequently, their destruction entails the extinguishing of identities, the dehumanization of the "other," and an unshakeable sense of absence and loss.

To illustrate the range of motivations behind deliberate architectural devastation, Bevan explores several key themes. In the chapter "Cultural Cleansing," he drives home the connection between genocide and architectural destruction. The demolition of physical space, he argues, is often part of a larger program of denying a people "their history, continuing identity and ... containers of memory." In "Terror," he examines the symbolic power of these acts, from the German "Baedeker Raids," targeting historic English cities, to the attacks on the World Trade Center. Terror lies not only in the threat to personal security, but in targeting structures laden with strong associations—whether as symbols of national heritage, colonial occupation or financial might. In "Conquest and Revolution," he looks at the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the Khmer Rouge's anti-urbanism campaigns, in which a ruling regime attempts to impose new identities upon a population through the manipulation of urban space. Finally, in "Fences and Neighbors," he examines the impact of partitions and borders on the built environment in contexts ranging from Israel/

Palestine to Cyprus and Northern Ireland. The inevitable consequence of such partitions, he writes, is "an ugly civic scarification ... which spreads contagion well beyond the wound itself."

This thematic approach, while providing a broad background, has the drawback of grouping together widely divergent cases. In "Terror," for example, the 9/11 attacks are equated with the failure of American forces to protect Iraq's archaeological sites, as well as the German blitz of Britain. While certainly indicative of the U.S. military's stunning lack of cultural understanding, the looting of Mesopotamian artifacts was not a deliberate act of cultural destruction and was carried out by Iraqis themselves. The World Trade Center attack, by contrast, was a deliberate symbolic act by a terrorist cell, while the bombing of London (though horrific) took place under the aegis of conventional warfare.

This approach also leads to repetition, with the Nazis appearing in almost every chapter, along with the Soviets, Serbian nationalists and the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. As a result, Bevan's thematic divisions become blurred. When is the demolition of a Bosnian mosque an example of "cultural cleansing," rather than plain old "conquest"? The book also relies on a familiar rogues' gallery of totalitarian regimes and nationalist fanatics. Little attention is paid to the acts of cultural destruction carried out by Western democracies in Southeast Asia or the Middle East, so often justified on the basis of "military necessity" or technological failure.

Despite Bevan's emphasis on architecture's importance as a site of memory, we also get very little sense of what destroyed buildings meant to the people who inhabited them. The only human voices present (drawn mostly from newspaper reports) are those of government ministers and architecture critics, most of whom echo the official line on the value of national heritage. Bevan visited many of the sites he writes about, but did not record the impressions of local inhabitants. Doubtless he would have found that people's relationship to these spaces had less to do with national symbolism and more to do with personal memories. Despite its stated intent, this book remains largely on a macro-historical landscape where human beings are conspicuous by their absence.

Bevan's most thoughtful and provocative contributions come in the final sections on reconstruction, commemoration, protection and prosecution. He writes, "rebuilding can be as symbolic as the destruction that necessitates it. Construction can be used to cement a violent sundering of the built environment or to weave the fabric of a former life back together." In some instances, rebuilding can be every bit as violent as the original act of demolition, leading to forgetting as much as remembering. In postwar Munich, for example, all structures dating from the Nazi period were promptly bulldozed, and rebuilding efforts were devoted to re-evoking the city's glorious 19th century past. The result was a landscape of "willed forgetfulness," a Disney-like reconstruction that not only lacked authenticity but also erased all traces of the Nazi past, whitewashing this dark episode in the city's history. As an alternative to this wholesale, unreflective rebuilding, Bevan supports "critical preservation," which aims to preserve traces of past conflict—bullet holes, crumbling walls—and incorporate them into new

settings, giving communities the chance to both start anew and remember the past. A useful example of this approach was the recent proposal to maintain a fifteen-story fragment of the World Trade Center as a memorial to the events of 9/11. Though the plan held powerful symbolic resonance, it was quickly rejected in favor of a new building, "bigger and better than before," reflecting the desire to shift the focus from feelings of loss to a triumphant celebration of American democracy and freedom.

In the closing chapter, Bevan returns to his original connection between genocide and architectural destruction in order to press for more vigorous prosecution of crimes against architecture. Although cultural heritage has been protected by international treaties for more than 50 years, it rarely features in war crimes tribunals. Yet from the Nazi looting of synagogues to the Taliban's demolition of the Bamiyan Buddhas, deliberate destruction of the physical environment has often presaged devastating conflicts. Bevan's timely book urges us to remain attentive to such early warning signs. ■

FILM

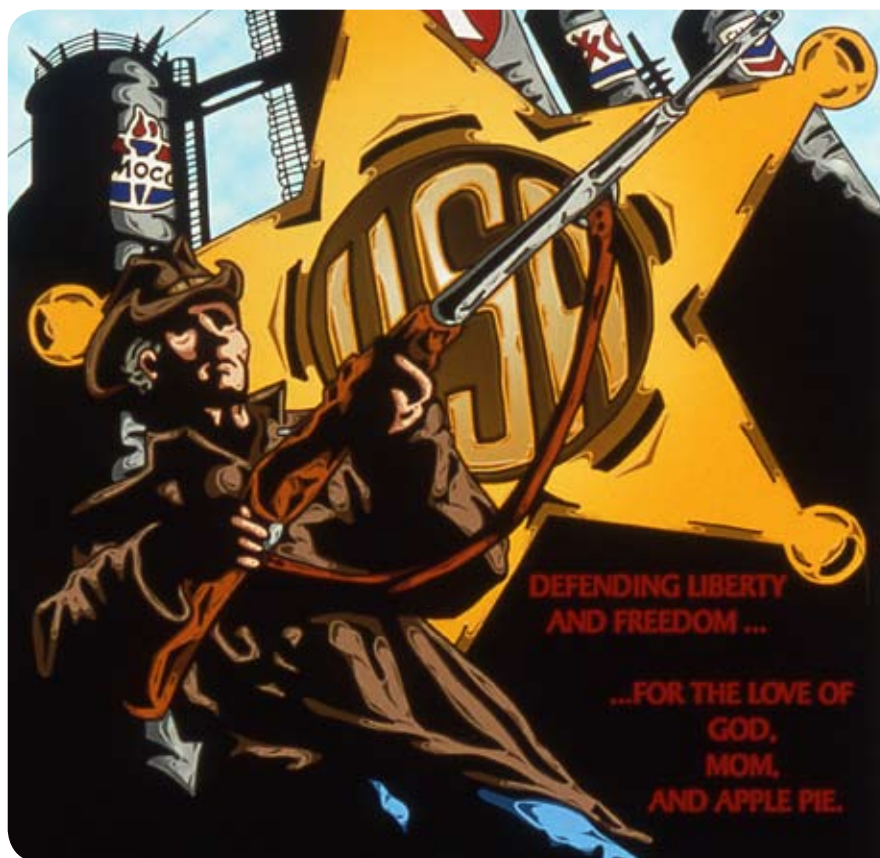
Perpetuating the Yellow Peril

By Lakshmi Chaudhry

AT FIRST GLANCE, Jeff Adachi's *Slanted Screen* is an earnest documentary that covers familiar ground. The shameful depiction of minorities—in this case, Asian-American men—in television and film is hardly news. What makes the movie special, however, is that it offers a rare view of Hollywood from the inside. Apart from the occasional talking head, the interviewees are actors, producers, directors and screenwriters.

Part of the movie's interest lies in their horror stories, which are likely to make even the most jaded viewer cringe. Producer Terence Chang—whose big-budget credits include *Mission Impossible II*, *Face-Off* and *Broken Arrow*—describes being told to change the race of the white villain in the script for the Chow Yun

[art space]



In **The Artooning Show**, 24 artists demonstrate a variety of conventional cartooning techniques, along with approaches drawn from abstract and traditional art. The exhibit showcases this combination through drawings, prints, paintings, sculptures and ceramics. "We wanted to show an all-around view," says Adrienne Bea Smith, co-owner of Main Street Gallery, "and politics are so much of a part of cartooning." At left is an untitled piece from the "Politics Propaganda Series" by Christopher W. Weeks, an artist, graphic designer, and photography teacher. He cites Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus* as a major influence for his work. The exhibit will be on display at the Main Street Gallery in Groton, NY, through July 23. For more information visit www.mainstreetgal.com.

Fat vehicle, *The Replacement Killers*, and make him a Chinese druglord instead. The logic: "If the hero is Asian then the bad guys have to be Asian as well." The racism is open and unapologetic.

As gruesome as such anecdotes may be, *Slanted Screen* is most compelling when its subjects explore the conflict between who they are and what they do. It may be hard to watch a repulsive Long Duk Dong slobbering over the girl in *Sixteen Candles*, but it's harder still to be the guy who plays him: Gedde Wata-nabe, a Japanese-American actor born and raised in Utah, who put on a fake accent to utter immortal lines, such as "No more yankie my wankie. The Donger need food."

In the seven-minute short film *The Screen Test*—which was screened along with *Slanted Screen* in San Francisco—actress Judy Lee sums up every Asian actor's moral dilemma: "Our paychecks come from stereotypes." When there are practically no roles for Asians, a script that calls for an "opium den mistress" is a cause for celebration.

The art of survival lies in enduring what you must, and quietly changing what you can within Hollywood's stifling parameters.

What may look like just another stereotype from the outside may in fact be a serious attempt to challenge industry norms. A good example is what has become Hollywood's favorite

Asian character: the martial arts warrior. Bruce Lee may seem to be just another uni-dimensional macho hero, but his rise marked an epochal shift for Asian Americans, both as actors and as men. After decades of being demonized as sly yet effeminate "yellow peril" in the post-World War II era, Lee represented a positive, vigorous version of masculinity. And it's this consolation that actors like Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa cling to when they play similar roles in movies like *Mortal Kombat*, even when they're negative. "If the choice is between playing wimpy business men and the bad guy," Tagawa tells Adachi, "I'd rather play the bad guy. ... I want kids to know that Asian men have balls."

When Hollywood allows Asian leading men to be macho, it rarely gives them the privilege of being "American." "Asian Americans tend to be looked at as perpetual aliens," says author and poet David Mura. "In other words, an Asian-American male can't be seen as representative of all Americans in the way Tom Cruise or Tom Hanks or even Denzel Washington can."

According to University of Delaware English professor Peter X. Feng, the benefit of safely foreign heroes such as Jet Li or Chow Yun Fat is that "they come to these shores to solve a problem and then they leave. So there is never any question of integrating them into the American body politic." In this sense, Mura argues, Asian-American men are worse off than women, who "are more easily assimilated by the white psyche in part because they are seen as sexually available to white men." Hence Lucy Liu can be one of *Charlie's Angels*, but no one would cast, say, Jason Scott Lee in a remake of *Star-sky and Hutch*—though Hollywood execs were only too happy to cast him as an Indian in *The Jungle Book*.

While there have been exceptions to this depressing norm—Dustin Nguyen as Officer Harry Ioki in "21 Jump Street" or more recently, *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*—the predicament facing Asian male actors today is grim compared to Hollywood's silent era, when Sessue Hayakawa rivaled Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin and John Barrymore in popularity as a leading man. But despite his Rudolf Valentino-esque per-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JEFF ADACHI

Mako, an actor who has appeared in over 90 feature films, talks about stereotypic portrayals he has had to struggle against.

sona, even Hayakawa almost never got the girl—not unless she was played by his own Japanese wife, Aoki. His present-day counterparts are no better off. Chow Yun Fat never gets to kiss Mira Sorvino in *Replacement Killers*, while the creators of *Romeo Must Die* edited out the sole kiss between Aaliyah and Jet Li. "To say it doesn't affect us is bullshit," declares Tagawa, the anguish bubbling to the surface as he exclaims, "We're not eunuchs!"

The stark contrast between the sexual images of Asian men and women on-screen follows the dictates of age-old colonialist logic, where the sexual appropriation of women is accompanied by the emasculation of the men. That the documentary never includes a discussion of women, or their perspective, is a glaring omission. The very action hero roles that seem to affirm Asian masculinity can be deeply problematic from a feminist perspective. Is a Schwarzenegger-like machismo really the kind of Asian male identity that we want to promote?

The sexual politics are even more complicated. Take, for example, the comments of Gene Cajayon, who directed one of the first Filipino-American movies, *The Debut* (2000). Cajayon says it was important for him to make his lead character "someone who is attractive to white girls" so as to establish his credentials as a bona fide "cool kid." But how subversive is this character if his masculinity requires a white seal of sexual approval and treats white women as mere markers of his prowess?

A more compassionate interpretation of this desire is to see it instead as a hun-



From the *Slanted Screen* poster

ger to be seen as sexual, period. That it entails white affirmation is merely a sad acknowledgement of the requirements of the broader culture we live in. "It seems to me unfair to question the desire of Asian-American men to feel sexually attractive," says Mura. "If an African-American man were to say, for instance, that he wanted to be appreciated for his intelligence and not just stereotyped for sexual or athletic prowess, would we say he was succumbing to a trap which defined real male worth by intelligence?"

Mura argues that Asian men "desire a complete picture of ourselves and to be valued as complete individuals. We desire respect in those areas where we feel we are disrespected. We don't get to pick and choose where those areas are." But we are more likely to see a more "complete" picture of Asian men if we portray them as they are rather than as ethnic versions of Hollywood gender-garden fantasies of manhood that haven't served white men well. In fact, those kind of movies will be just as valuable for the rest of us, male or female, Asian or otherwise. ■

BOOKS

The Senselessness of Guantánamo

By Steve Weinberg

CHICAGO LAWYER JOSEPH Margulies' *Guantánamo and the Abuse of Presidential Power* (Simon & Schuster) is about as convincing an indictment of Bush, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Vice President Dick Cheney, and at least a few dozen civilian and military advisors as can be imagined in an atmosphere of government secrecy. Margulies, who represents some of the men incarcerated within the U.S. prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, uses his position as an advocate to, well, advocate. But despite any bias he might harbor as a defense lawyer, Margulies has used his unusual access to top-secret operations to write a book that ought to persuade anybody—regardless of political ideology—that Bush has allowed immoral and probably illegal treatment of fellow human beings.

Margulies opens the book with a dramatic scene from November 2004. In a prison cell at Guantánamo,

Margulies sits with Mamdouh Habib, an Australian citizen. It is the first time Margulies has met his client, despite Habib arriving at Guantánamo in May 2002. Before that, Habib had spent six months in a prison near Cairo, delivered there by U.S. authorities hoping that Egyptian interrogators would extract information by whatever means necessary.

During the meeting, the prisoner, "by order of the U.S. military," must sit with his back to the door so that he cannot see natural light. His feet are shackled together and the shackles are bolted to the floor. The guards made one concession at Margulies' request—unshackling Habib's hands. Margulies is finding it difficult to mount an effective defense, given that the U.S. government has never charged Habib with specific wrongdoing, nor defended the detention in open court.

As Margulies leaves the meeting, Habib grasps his arm. "I'm dying here, Joe," he says. "They'll never let me go home." At home are Habib's wife and infant daughter who barely knows her father.

Habib turned out to be wrong. In one of the few uplifting moments in a profoundly depressing book, Habib arrives at Sydney airport on Jan. 28, 2005, aboard a plane chartered by the Australian gov-

spin cycle

BY JESSICA CLARK AND TRACY VAN SLYKE

What She Said

This month, we invited Jennifer L. Pozner, executive director of Women In Media & News, to tell us about the organization's new project: WIMN's Voices: A Group Blog on Women, Media, AND...

The next time some pundit blames the underrepresentation of women writers in corporate and independent media on a supposed lack of available talent, check out the dynamic and insightful writing at www.wimnonline.org/WIMNVocesBlog.

WIMN's Voices creates critical space for media monitoring and analysis by, for and about women. Through this diverse online community, dozens of leading women

journalists, media critics, scholars and activists (including *In These Times* Senior Editors Lakshmi Chaudhry and Silja J.A. Talvi) analyze coverage of women in relation to specific news beats. From war to health, race to humor, international politics to pop culture and beyond, the blog illustrates that all issues can be reported as women's issues.

In the blog's first month, WIMN's Voices writers were invited to discuss their posts in outlets as varied as ABC News Now, *WomenseNews.org* and *Clamor*. Here's a taste of a few recent entries:

Andi Zeisler on *Newsweek's* mea-culpa to single women: To celebrate the 20th

anniversary of telling unmarried women over 30 (that they were) less likely to marry than to die at the hands of terrorists by 40 ... "Marriage by the Numbers" revisits several of *Newsweek's* original subjects [from 1986] and finds—whaddya know?—that eight out of 11 (of the original 14) future cat ladies are in fact happily married after all ...

Sonali Kolhatkar on media coverage of Afghanistan: Mainstream and right-wing commentators expressed horror at the barbarism of a country we supposedly "liberated" (after an Afghan man faced the death penalty for converting to Christianity) ... Meanwhile, the in-

stitutionalized misogyny of Afghanistan's judiciary has escaped the notice of the media ...

Makani Themba Nixon on gender and race in the latest *X-Men* film: The comic book Storm's cold blooded, self assured fearlessness conjures up more of a Grace Jones than the cowering, wimpy character [Halle] Berry brings to the screen ... Storm's character was a bright spot in the relentless denigration of Black women in media ... The movie series has stripped Storm of her power and the storyline of all its potency ...

ernment. His release from Guantánamo is as mysterious as his detention. So is the presence of Margulies on the airplane. "I am the only lawyer allowed by the U.S. government to accompany a prisoner home from the base, a courtesy I cannot explain," Margulies says.

At the airport, Habib is reunited with his wife, Maha. "He had not seen her for more than three years, and, for a brief moment, he paused as if stunned by the sight," Margulies reports. "At Guantánamo, American interrogators had told him his wife was dead, and though he had spoken with her briefly since that lie, the simple sight of his wife shook him deeply."

Margulies' joy at seeing the Habibs reunited is tempered by his knowledge that at least 500 prisoners still share Habib's former circumstances at Guantánamo, as well as hundreds more placed by the U.S. government at prisons around the globe.

"They, like Mamdouh, are prisoners of the Bush Administration's post-9/11 detention policy," Margulies writes. "This book is about that policy."

Indeed it is. After the opening scene featuring Habib, the book devolves into heavy language about international law, interrogation techniques and torture devices. While difficult to complete because of its technical language and unrelenting depressing message, the book certainly repays the intellectual and psychological labors needed to make it to its final page.

Margulies summarizes the Bush administration's premises underlying the incarceration of almost certainly innocent individuals such as Habib like this: Prisoners of the war against terror "may be taken—kidnapped if necessary—from any location in the world, even thousands of miles from any battlefield, without the knowledge or participation of the host government and without any judicial process. ... They may be held for the rest of their lives, based solely on the president's self-asserted authority. At the prison, they can be subjected to any conditions or treatment the military devises. And throughout their imprisonment, they may be held incommunicado and in solitary confinement, without access to courts or counsel, without charges of any kind, unknown to the world, and without the benefit of the Geneva Conventions, an international treaty signed and ratified by the United States and designed to protect people seized during armed conflict."

Margulies writes emotionally throughout the book, but the text is fact-based,

excerpt

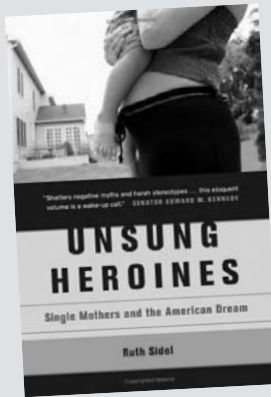


Waiting for What?

*Reagan's "welfare queens," Quayle's criticism of Murphy Brown and now Bush's dramatic slashing of social programs—single mothers have been under attack over the last 20 years. In **Unsung Heroines: Single Mothers and the American Dream** (University of California Press) sociologist Ruth Sidel combines interviews with 50 single mothers, ages 23 to 89, to provide their side of the story. Not surprisingly, the women offer a dramatic reinterpretation of the "American Dream."*

Many in middle and upper-middle-class America, in criticizing young women for having children without a stable partner to help with finances, child rearing, and the problems of daily life, implicitly assume that girls and young women would have more control over their lives if they deferred motherhood—that they would have more opportunities in education, in work, in making a better life; but low-income young women rarely see such choices as open to them at all. That is what they mean when they ask "Wait for what?" All too often they do not experience the rituals marking the growing-up process that higher-

income young people experience—the driver's license, perhaps even a car of their own, the senior prom, graduation from high school, summer and after-school jobs, moving on to college, and then entering the workforce. All these steps gradually mark the transitions from adolescence to adulthood for millions of Americans—but not for young people whose families have meager resources and who may live in areas lacking adequate schools, job opportunities, and the social and financial capital needed to participate in these rites of passage. As [noted economic sociologist Lisa] Dodson notes, "Motherhood is valued for the position, the clear and tangible role, it offers."



and no facts, no matter how knowledgeably presented, can explain how the Bush policy has survived. The lawlessness of a supposedly lawfully constituted government is breathtaking in its breadth and depth.

Outraged by this, Margulies joined other lawyers in filing a lawsuit, *Rasul v. Bush*. On June 28, 2004, the U.S. Supreme Court, in Margulies' words, "struck down these lawless detentions, rejecting the administration's core contention that the prison at Guantánamo was beyond the reach of the law. After *Rasul*, a prisoner at Guantánamo who invokes the authority of the federal court must be released unless the government establishes the lawfulness of the incarceration by a fair process."

Margulies cannot gloat about the ruling, however, given the penchant of Bush to ignore any check on presidential power. "No person may be imprisoned at Guantánamo without proof, presented

before a neutral tribunal, that the incarceration is justified," Margulies notes. "At least, that's what the decision said. Enforcing this decision is another matter."

No doubt some will argue that human rights violations are a small price to pay for information that might help prevent terrorism. Margulies posits that perhaps such an argument would contain at least a speck of credibility if those incarcerated really constituted "the worst of the worst" from the terrorist realm. But, he says, that is untrue.

"Today, no one can credibly maintain that the prisoners in Cuba are the worst of the worst. ... More than 250 prisoners have been released with no intimation that they did anything wrong. The chief interrogator at the base says 75 percent of the prisoners are no longer being questioned. Even the camp commander says many of the 500 who remain could be released tomorrow at no risk to the United States." ■

BY TERRY J. ALLEN

The 9/11 Faith Movement



A MERICANS LOVE A conspiracy. According to a May 17 Zogby poll, 42 percent believe the U.S. government and the 9/11 Commission are covering up what really happened on Sept. 11, 2001.

There is something comforting about a world where someone is in charge—either for good (think gods) or evil (think Bush insiders plotting 9/11). Many people prefer to believe a Procrustean conspiracy rather than accept the alternative: Life can be random, viciously unjust and meaningless; tragedy and joy alike flow from complex combinations of good and bad intentions, careful plotting, random happenstance and bumbling incompetence.

Conspiracy hypotheses often consist of a vast pile of circumstantial evidence shaped into a seemingly coherent whole with the strong glue of faith. Debunk one or even many allegations and the pile still stands, impressive in its bulk and ideological coherence. If size were all, it would convince Pyrrho himself.

Scientific theories, on the other hand, depend on interlocking chains of evidence: The integrity of the whole relies on the soundness of each link. Break any one and the theory founders.

The 9/11 conspiracy is a classic example of a faith-based pile hypothesis. Its proponents cite a mountain of evidence to conclude that the U.S. government perpetrated the 9/11 attacks for its own traitorous ends, chiefly staging “a new Pearl Harbor” to rally support for an invasion of Iraq.

I spent months as a researcher conducting a fact-by-fact dissection of a few key aspects of this hypothesis. I

approached the project knowing that U.S. cabals had previously concocted *casus belli* to drive public support for war: the Gulf of Tonkin for Vietnam, incubator babies for the first Gulf War. And clearly from its early days, the Bush administration had lusted for war with Iraq.

But the hypothesis that it planned and executed the 9/11 attacks is just not supported by a chain of evidence, nor do the facts support the conspiracists’ key charge that World Trade Center buildings were destroyed by pre-positioned explosives.

Structural engineers found the destruction consistent with fires caused by the jet liner strike; that temperatures need not actually melt the steel but that expansion and other fire-related stresses would account for compromised architectural integrity.

When David Ray Griffin, a theologian by trade, said it was “physically impossible by laws of physics” for the planes alone to have brought down the towers, I asked what engineers had confirmed that. “I haven’t talked to any because they would be too afraid to tell the truth,” he said. “How would you be able to protect your family if you were to accuse the government?” he asked, accusing the government.

Many conspiracists offer the collapse of WTC Building 7 as the strongest evidence for the kind of controlled demolition that would prove a plot. Although not hit by planes, it was damaged by debris, and suffered fires eventually fueled by up to 42,000 gallons of diesel fuel stored near ground level. Griffin cited as evidence of government complicity that the building’s sprinkler system should have, but didn’t, put out the fires. But the theologian did not know and had not considered that the collapse of the towers had broken the area’s water main.

Another conspiracist, Alex Jones, writes on his Web site, “Larry Silver-

stein, the owner of the WTC complex, admitted ... that he and the NYFD decided to ‘pull’ WTC 7.” (Leave aside how unlikely it would be for the government to include Silverstein in a treasonous conspiracy, or that the NYFD was in on it, too.)

Silverstein’s actual quote: “I remember getting a call from the fire department commander, telling me that they were not sure they were going to be able to contain the fire, and I said, ‘We’ve had such terrible loss of life, maybe the smartest thing to do is pull it.’ And they made that decision to pull and we watched the building collapse.”

Jones continues: “The word ‘pull’ is industry jargon for taking a building down with explosives.” In fact, a Lexis Nexis search for a three-year period fails to find one American reference to “pull a building” without the preposition “down” when referring to intentional destruction. An alternative explanation would be that given the lack of water and the number of injured and missing firefighters, the NYFD decided to pull workers from Building 7 to concentrate on search and rescue at the fallen towers.

In the end, this kind of undermining of individual “facts,” although relatively easy, is irrelevant for those who base their beliefs on piles rather than chains of evidence.

But the work should be done. Pile conspiracies can be dangerous. Those who deny that HIV is responsible for AIDS, for example, have contributed to unnecessary infections and deaths.


And the 9/11 conspiracy hypotheses distract from the growing chain of evidence documenting how the Bush administration actually manipulated this country to war on a train of lies riding tracks of fear—cynically using the bodies of the 9/11 victims as fuel. ■

Contact Terry J. Allen at tallen@igc.org

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Kal Like Me

Continued from backpage

anything but the most low-paying or backbreaking of jobs. Still, many Roma have not wanted to assimilate to European culture. In addition to wanting to speak their own language—something almost never encouraged in European public schooling—they have also insisted on living life on their own terms, and at their own pace. Some Roma customs—including early marriage for 12- or 13-year-old girls to men several decades older and strict gender roles between adults—rub many egalitarian-minded Europeans the wrong way.

A Serbian-based Roma music group, Kal, has become an important new voice in the fight for Roma rights, with their eponymous debut album (Tango Records, 2006). It is a reclaiming, of sorts, and a way of diffusing the negative connotation affiliated with being called “Black”—and all of what is supposed to be associated with that word: dirty, ugly, impure and undesirable.

Kal is a brave, engrossing album deeply rooted in Balkan Romani music; the musicians’ training forms the solid backbone to this album. But *Kal* also blends an unlikely combination of Middle Eastern, Argentinian, Turkish, Indian, and even Jamaican influences, musical genres that the band has absorbed into its repertoire.

Dragan Ristic is the frontman for Kal, which he founded with his brother, Dushan Ristic. When they’re not making music, the Ristic brothers host the Amala Summer School in Serbia, an annual retreat to which all Roma people are invited to come learn more about their language, history, cultural heritage, and political power.

In These Times spoke with Dragan Ristic by phone, from Serbia:

How do you identify yourself to outsiders: Roma or Gypsy?

I am from a Roma family, a child of the Roma movement, and I am very proud to be Roma. For me, “gypsy” has a perjorative context. I won’t use that word, and I ask people to stop saying it because it offends us. Maybe 20 percent of Roma people do not use it in the perjorative context when they call themselves that. But you see, the *gadje* use this in the perjorative context.

You know what this means, yes?

Yes. The “whites,” or any non-Roma person.

Etymologically, “gypsy” is a version of the word, Egyptian, [where people used to think the Roma came from]. Here in Serbia and throughout Europe, the word has come to mean the same thing as “dirty,” “untouchable,” and so on. It is an insult. It would be the same as Americans using a bad, offensive word about your Blacks.

Words like “nigger,” perhaps?

Yes, exactly. You know, we see their story as being like our story. We know about Martin Luther King, and about Malcolm X. We feel that the things that have happened in the Black movement are happening in the Roma movement, with our histories of oppression and slavery, with the discrimination we still face today trying to get jobs and be recognized as human beings. There are differences, of course, but I see them as small.

Tell me about your childhood, growing up as a Roma child during the time of President Tito, in the greater Yugoslavia. How does that life compare to that of modern-day Serbia?

I grew up in a Romani family, in a small town southwest of Belgrade, named Valjevo. I was not born in the Romani ghetto. I was born in the good part of the town.

Until 1990, there was this utopian image about the equality of all citizens and people in one country. It was the “official opinion” that all people are actually equal. But, really, Roma people were always being discriminated against.

Then, in the beginning of the ’90s, communist regimes fell down, and all kinds of hate just rose up. Serbians felt Serbian, Croats were Croats, but Roma people didn’t have a choice. The ones that could, because of the lighter color of their skin, decided to be affiliated with one or the other. And some of them, because of darker skin, didn’t have a choice to say anything but what they are: Roma.

I went through many levels of education and university training, and I still decided to be a part of the Romani movement. I am not just a musician, more like a conceptual artist, and I am very politi-

cally engaged. Having a chance to spread political messages through my music is essential. For me to have the opportunity and then not to do this would be an insult. It is an obligation.

Our approach to the majority population is to play to the image of Gypsy as musicians and singers. They like it because they really react to the Roma just like entertaining minstrels.

We can make a living, and we can reach people with music. But don’t expect me to be a simple Roma musician who will simply make beautiful music for you to listen to. I’m going to sing a lot of truth about what is happening in society to the Roma. I am going to sing about discrimination and walls being built to separate Roma from *gadje*, and houses being burned down with Romani people inside. That’s my obligation.

We show that Roma music is not all traditional music. Roma music is also new music and, in this way, we proudly have a way to involve our culture in European and world culture.

You have enjoyed professional successes in both music and the dramatic arts. You have traveled to many countries, and speak several languages. Do you still feel as though you fit into Roma culture and society?

This is a good question. It is difficult sometimes. All of my life, I’ve felt in the middle, like I don’t fit in anywhere. For Roma people, I was never enough Roma, for the *gadje*, I was never enough *gadje*.

For a long time, I saw it as a problem and weakness and then started to use it as a weapon to give me power. Today, I know I am somewhere [between those two worlds] and belong to the intellectual part of Romani society, which is rare in our society. It is something that just started to build up. Unfortunately, I am still in the minority class of Roma intellectuals, but that will change, as our movement grows stronger. ■

Kal’s first U.S. Tour will take place in September 2006, with another tour planned for 2008. Find out more at www.rockpaperscissors.biz/go/kal. For more information on current legal and political developments affecting Roma in Europe, visit the European Roma Rights Center at www.errc.org.



Kal (Black) Like Me

BY SILJA J.A. TALVI

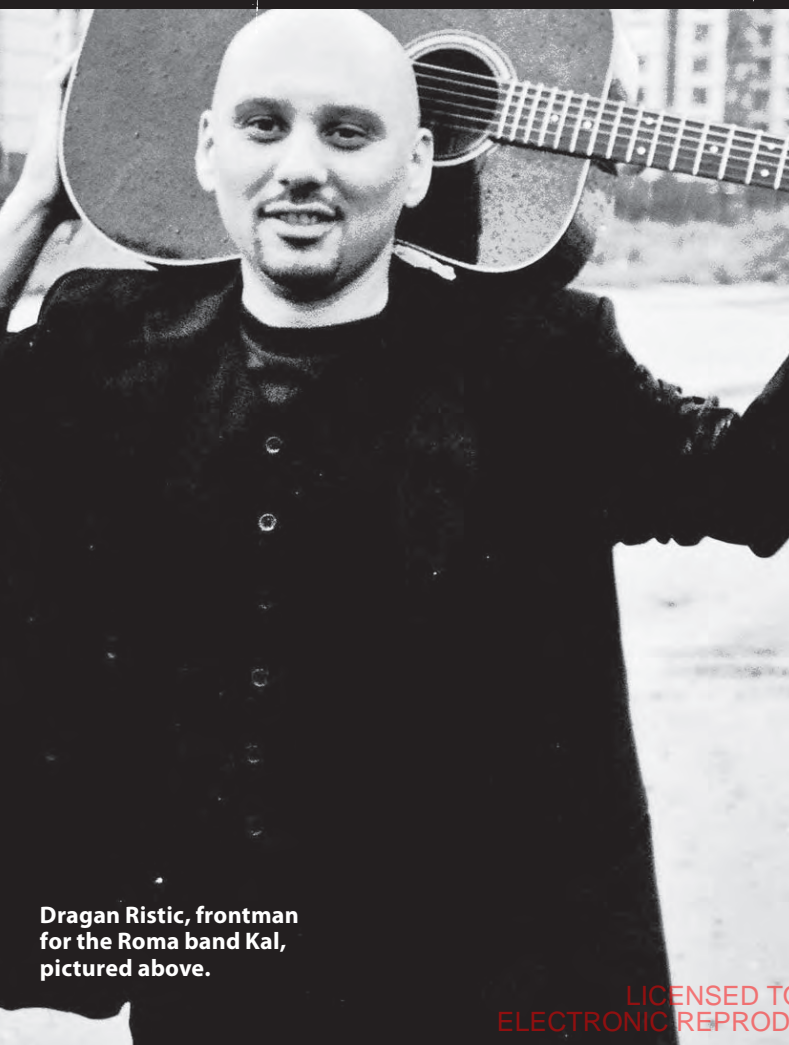
A new generation of Roma are insisting on rights and dignity, and an innovative Belgrade-based musical group is more than willing to be a voice of liberation for the *lengo drom* ahead.

IN THE ROMANI LANGUAGE, *lengo drom* refers to the “long road.” In the thousand years since the ancestors of today’s Roma people left India, it has been a long road—as daring and far-flung an exodus as any people have managed to achieve.

Today, with their nomadic lifestyle fading, Roma live in Israel, Brazil, Finland, the United States and the Roma “motherland,” India. (In India and the Middle East, they are known as the Doma.) The greatest concentration of Romani families are in Serbia, Hungary, France, Macedonia, the Czech Republic and Albania, and the majority of Eastern and Central European Roma live in segregated neighborhoods and ghettos. They are Europe’s fastest growing ethnic group.

Anti-Roma sentiment runs high in Europe, where Roma people suffer hate crimes, high incarceration rates, and lack of educational and housing opportunities so often as to barely warrant mention in local or international news. In Europe, Roma people have long since been thought of, or addressed as, “Black,” which translates to “Kal” in Romani.

Being “Kal,” often means that they cannot secure



Dragan Ristic, frontman for the Roma band Kal, pictured above.

PHOTOS: MIKE BOWRING

CONTINUED ON PAGE 47